M. FETHULLAH GÜLEN'S UNDERSTANDING OF *SUNNAH*

Submitted by

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

The aim and objective of this study is to highlight the importance of and the status of *hadith* in Islam, as well as its relevance and reference to *sunnah,* the Prophetic tradition and all that this integral source of reference holds in Islam.

Furthermore, *hadith*, in its nature, origin and historical development with its close relationship with the concept of memorisation and later recollection came about after the time of Prophet Muhammad. This study will thus explore the reasons behind the prohibition, in its initial stage, with the authorisation of recording the *hadith*s and its writing at another time. The private pages of *hadith* recordings kept by the companions will be sourced and explored as to how these pages served as prototypes for *hadith* compilations of later generations.

The Qur'an and *hadith*, as they exist as integrals parts complementing each other, provides the impetus and emphasis of the interpretation of the Qur'an by *hadith*. In addition, this research will also identify the law-making characteristic of *hadith* after the Qur'an, and the implications and regulations the *hadith* project and provide in their role as the second primary source of Islam.

The approach of Western scholars to the Qur'an and *hadith* will also be a focus, considering why their perceptions of *hadith* are quite different from those of Muslim scholars. Within this specific definition of *hadith*, its meaning according to Islamic terminology becomes synonymous with the word '*sunnah*', also translated broadly as tradition, practice discourse, and prophetic observations and approvals.

The critical approach to religion with the emergence of the Age of Enlightenment in Europe prompted Western scholars to formulate some overly critical views and perceptions of Christianity and Judaism. Later these scholars chose to

subject Islam to the same process of criticism and investigation as their own respective religions. Significantly, Western scholars' approaches differed fundamentally from the more traditionally accepted perceptions of *hadith* held by Muslims in this regard.

To counter the discourse, the teachings and written works of Fethullah Gülen will be analysed and brought into the spectrum. Muslim scholars, by convention, bring evidence from the Qur'an, as well as the *sunnah,* to emphasise the importance of *sunnah* since the early period of Islam. In this regard the teaching of *hadith* by Islamic scholar and thinker Gülen will be utilised as a source and reference point. Unlike what has hitherto been prescribed in traditional *madrasah*s, Gülen's perspectives and contributions to the discipline of *hadith,* and innovative new methods he introduced, would be another perspective of this study.

As for methodology, the method of investigation will rely on a research technique 'for the objective, systematic, and qualitative description of manifest content of communications'. Therefore, this research will employ content and discourse analysis which is a social science methodology that is based on an understanding of human communication, including writing and context.[1]

[1] Siddiqi Muhammad Zubayr, *Hadith Literature İts Origin, Development &Special Features* (Cambridge,UK: The Islamic Text Society, 1993).p,220

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Context of the study and Intended Area of Research

The aim of this study is to emphasise the position and importance of *hadith* in Islam, its close relationship with the concept of *sunnah*, and its nature, origin and historical development. Exploring the recordings of *hadith* in the time of Prophet Muhammad,[2] while specifically drawing attention to the fact that they were written down under his direct supervision, this study will highlight the reasons behind the prohibition, at one stage, and authorisation of recording the *hadith*s in writing at another time. It will also explore the private pages of *hadith* (*sahifah*) recordings kept by the companions—these pages served as prototypes for *hadith* compilations for later generations.

Gülen is a post-modern contemporary writer and scholar with a large worldwide following. His works have been translated into many languages. He is a balanced thinker understanding the surrounding issues related to my thesis. Gülen is a specific hadith scholar with a balanced view strikingly creates understanding of past and present issues and challenges issues arising from critiques and rejecters of hadith both in the modern- secular as well as the Islamic world.

This study investigates Gülen's understanding of *hadith* and *sunnah* as well as his approach to *hadith*, his views on *sunnah* as a primary source, and the place and value of *sunnah* in his daily life. Furthermore, his methods of interpretation and teaching of *hadith* will be surveyed and explored. An involved study requires some background information on *hadith* as a prelude to the topic. In this study, however, this background information will be limited to thoughts and assessments on *hadith* in contemporary time, such as historical research on *hadith* in the West, epistemological differences between Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, and effects of modernism on

[2] Prophet Muhammad will indicate as "the Prophet" in this research

Muslim scholars. Various views and discussions on *sunnah* that have taken place in contemporary time will be studied in general terms.

Furthermore it will explore the relationship between the Qur'an and *hadith*, as they are an integral part of each other, with specific emphasis on the interpretation of the Qur'an by *hadith*. It will also point out the law-making quality of *hadith*, and examine the reasons why they are considered second in importance only after the Qur'an.

Researches carried out in the West about Islamic disciplines are generally focused on the Qur'an and *hadith*. Western scholars' approach to *hadith* will be studied in detail at a later stage, however, it is clear that compared to the Muslim scholars' approach their perception of hadith is quite different. Before considering the definitions and understanding of *hadith* within the West, we look into the meaning and definition of *hadith* within the traditional Islamic context, and immediately note that the term '*hadith*' is reserved by scholars of theology and the traditionalists specifically for the totality of words, actions and tacit approvals of the Prophet. Within this specific definition of *hadith*, its meaning according to Islamic terminology becomes synonymous with the word '*sunnah*', also translated broadly as tradition, practice discourse, and prophetic observations and approvals.

Using the dissimilar views of scholars in terms of *hadith*, the study takes a close look at different perspectives. To complete the discourse, the teachings and written works of Fethullah Gülen will be analysed and brought into the spectrum.

The leader of a movement, Fethullah Gülen is a scholar and intellectual who has endeavoured to cultivate a peaceful new generation equipped with a positive approach and modern skills. His teachings are based on the Qur'an and *sunnah*—particularly on contemporary interpretations of *hadith* and understanding of the philosophy of *sira* (the life of the Prophet) in relation to the needs of our time. His new approach and

fresh interpretations of the *sunnah* have placed Gülen amongst a new group of contemporary and modern scholars. Consequently, his thoughts and ideas have begun to draw academic interest from many parts of the world. This is the primary reason why this research will focus on Gülen's understanding of *hadith* and *sunnah*.

In a Quranic verse, often quoted by Muslim scholars, God draws attention to the importance of the Prophet's own role as interpreter:[3] "...and if you are to dispute among yourselves about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if indeed you believe in God and the Last Day".[4] Essentially, the Qur'an did not go into specifics on many issues and detailed explanations were made by the Prophet. Conforming to the conventional wisdom and Islamic tradition, Gülen displays a similar approach and draws attention to the functions of *sunnah* as clarifying what is ambiguous, explicating what is implicit, specifying what is general and making conditional what is unconditional.[5]

Gülen's teaching of *hadith* is another topic this study will deal with. His *hadith* teaching methods will be analysed and compared with methods used in traditional *madrasah*s. Investigating Gülen's contributions to the discipline of *hadith* is another aim of this study. Along with this, Gülen's views about the discipline of *hadith* are one of the aims of this study.

While his views on *hadith* understandings in the West will be discussed, his stance vis-à-vis sceptical Western approaches to *hadith* transmitters, and his assessments will be given a special focus. His position in the face of modern critical thinking sweeping the Muslim world—which resulted in the emergence of scepticism about this important discipline of Islamic knowledge—will also be explored. The

[3] *The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English* by Ali Ünal has been used as a resource for the translated verses of the Qur'an in this research.
[4] (Quran 4:59).
[5] Ibrahim Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı* (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitap Publishing, 2007),p, 108.

focus would be to seek answers to questions such as 'Does he agree with the new critical approaches? If so, to what extent?' and 'If he stands against this tendencies, how does he challenge these unorthodox observations?'

All sceptical approaches and critical works on *hadith* have also affected some Muslim intellectuals and researchers. Ismail Albayrak draws attention to this point and asserts that the sceptical approach developed in the West toward *hadith* narrators contributed the negative approach towards *hadith* among some Muslims.[6] Gülen's teaching of *hadith* requires one to be able to analyse in an unbiased manner in order to completely grasp the area of study.

With the influence of these currents, trapped between tradition and modernism, and distanced from their own value system, a new class of reformist Muslim intellectuals emerged. This study will attempt to explain these key points in relation to similar and dissimilar discourse.

Significance of the Study

Given the socio-political developments and major changes in greater Europe like Spanish inquisition followed by sea-travel and discovery of the new world, the Reformation, and the French revolution, it is apparent that many new freedoms in perspectives and outlooks arose as a consequence, leading to a dwindling in power of the church establishment. A critical approach to religion with the emergence of this Age of Enlightenment prompted some Western scholars to formulate some overly critical views and perceptions of Judeo-Christian traditions. Many centuries hence, the influence of these critical currents, trapped between tradition and modernism, and distanced from their own value system, a new class of reformist Muslim intellectuals

[6] Ismail Albayrak, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Tefsir Anlayışı* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010), pp,13-26.

have also emerged. This has become particularly evident in quarters of post-modern contemporary Muslim societies like Turkey, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Morocco and Egypt where Islamists are now openly at wits end with Western trained Muslim intellectuals, agnostics and secularists.

Fethullah Gülen, a leader of a growing transnational movement, is a reputable scholar and intellectual who has committed to cultivating a peaceful new generation espousing a practical and positive approach using modern skills. Gülen looks at challenges and criticism of traditional Islamic sources through *sunnah* and *hadith* perspective and offers solutions and answers from his post-modern contemporary perspective.

In this regard, this study is very significant in analysing how Gülen counteracts moves and trends in the modern contemporary world for the offsetting of negative and detrimental perspectives and outlooks about Islam and Muslims. This research will attempt to explain these key points in relation to similar and dissimilar discourse.

Research Questions

This research will primarily look at assumed questions about Gülen's inquiry into the views of modern-contemporary scholars in the issue of *sunnah/hadith* literature, its authenticity, and its interpretations. Basically, three research questions come to the fore:

1. What is hadith and why is it important in Islam?
2. What are Gülen's responses to criticisms and doubts about the compilation of *hadith* recordings during the period of prophet's life-time and his interaction with his companions?

3. What are Gülen's attitudes and views about the relationship between the authenticity of *hadith* and modern Muslim and non-Muslim scholars' perspectives?
4. What are Gülen's own personal interpretations of and perspectives on *hadith/sunnah* studies and how does he deal with some modern contemporary issues?

Organisation of Thesis

This thesis examines the *hadith* and *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad in Islam with special references to Fethullah Gülen's works within five chapters. As will be seen below, there are strong relations among the chapters. The first two chapters prepare a way for the last three chapters where we will discuss in detail Gülen's understanding and conceptualisation of *hadith*. In this context, the first chapter focuses on the importance of *hadith* and *sunnah* as a primary source after the Qur'an, where meanings will also be explained linguistically and in Islamic terminology. This chapter also looks at topics such as how the discipline of *hadith* was developed and recorded, the reasons for the prohibition and later permission for writing down *hadith* and how the companions internalised, memorised and recorded *hadith*.

The second chapter analyses *hadith* in contemporary time according to Western scholars. It covers topics such as their perception of *hadith*, relationship between the Qur'an, the Prophet and *hadith* according to their thoughts, their point of view on *hadith* recordings and their impact on Muslim scholars' perception of *hadith*.

In the last three chapters, Gülen's understanding of *sunnah* is examined. The chapters will focus on the meaning of *hadith* and *sunnah*, the differences between them and the recording of *hadith* in the time of Prophet Muhammad according to Gülen's thoughts. Although it is open to subjective evaluations, we will devote lengthy discussions to the question how Gülen internalises the principle of *sunnah* in his own life and his personal interpretation of *hadith* and *sunnah* according to various

contemporary developments and changes. Finally, his teaching of *hadith* in his private circle and reflections to academic areas are also main topics in these three chapters.

Literature Review

Early History of *Hadith* Collection

Besides the meaning and function of *hadith* as explained in the introduction, it is necessary to draw attention here to the works that have been carried out on the reliability, recording, safeguarding and compilation of *hadith* and *sunnah* since the advent of Islam. It should be stated at the beginning that according to Islamic sources, the Prophet encouraged his companions to memorise and study *hadith* alongside the Qur'an.[7] As these reports demonstrate, the *hadith* and *sunnah* have been rigorously learned, safeguarded and transmitted since the time of the Prophet. For this reason, while *hadith* were recorded on whatever material was available at the time, such as leather, wood and date leaves, by some of the companions, other companions collected and compiled *hadith* in the form of small booklets called *sahifah*. The two most famous of these booklets are Abd Allah b. 'Amr b. al-'As' (684 CE/65 AH) collection called *Sahifah Sadiqah* and Abu Hurayrah (681CE/59 AH)'s *Sahihah*.[8]

Following these works, the process of *hadith* compilations began at the end of the 1st century and beginning of the 2nd century AH.[9] The first compilation in this area was achieved by Hammam b. Munabbih (719 CE/101 AH). He compiled news from the companions alongside the traditions of the Prophet. While works on the classification of *hadith* gained greater care and attention from the beginning of the middle of the 2nd century AH, other books began emerging. Also authored during this period, were biographies on the Prophet and his companions, and various kinds of

[7] See Abu Da'wud, *'Ilm*, 10; Tirmidhi, *'Ilm*, 7; Ibn Majah, *Muqaddimah*, 18; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 4, 82.
[8] Talat Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi* (Ankara: Ankara University Publications, 1988).p, 199
[9] "After Hijrah" Hijrah means "immigration" The Islamic calendar starts from the day the Prophet, immigrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D.

hadith collections, such as *sunan, jami'* (large collection of authentic *hadith*) and *musannaf* (content arranged according to topics). The *hadith* books collected by Muslim scholars in 2nd century could be classified in five groups. The books of *sirah* and *maghazi* (The Prophet`s life and the early period of Islam), *sunan*, *jami*, *musannaf* and the books assigned for some significant topics. The books of *sirah* and *maghazi* were regarding the Prophet Muhammad`s life and early period of Islam. They also recorded the Prophet`s worship and his moral values. The *sunan* books contain the hadiths that classified topics according to *fiqh* (jurisprudence) discipline. *Jami* is similar to *sunan* but it contains extra knowledge different to *sunan*, such as the creation of the human being, the universe and others. It also contains the history of Prophets, virtues of companions and etc.[10]

By the 3rd century of Islam, the most famous traditionists, complete their *jami'*, the six major collections of authentic *hadith* called *al-Kutub al-Sittah* works that are considered the most important reference sources in Islam after the Qur'an.[11] These six books contain 33,132 *hadith* in total, including those that are repeated. Some *hadith* scholars recompiled in one book the *hadith* contained in *al-Kutub al-Sittah* by excluding the repeated ones. Ibn al-Dayba's (d. 1537 CE) *Taysir al-Wusul ila Jami' al-'Usul*, which contains 10,490 *hadith*, is considered to represent *al-Kutub al-Sittah* in terms of datum an authority as it includes all of the *hadith* included in these six famous collections.[12] The works and methods of the first generation of Muslims were observed by the scholars of generations that followed and adopted as a norm in the discipline of *hadith*.

According to Sunni Muslims, *al-Kutub al-Sittah* contains the authentic hadiths. The collection is:

[10] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*.p, 207-212
[11] Ibid.pp, 200–231
[12] Ibrahim Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı* (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitap Publishing, 2007).p, 8

- *Sahih al-Bukhari*, contains 7.275 authentic *hadiths*. This book is divided into nine volumes and collected by Abu Abdullah Muhammad b. Ismail b. al-Mughirah al-Bukhari (d. 256 AH, 870 CE)
- *Sahih al-Muslim*, contains 9200 *hadiths* and has been divided into seven volumes. This source is the most authentic book of hadith after *Sahih al-Bukhari* in Islam and was collected by Muslim b. al-Hajjaj (d. 261 AH, 875 CE).
- *Sunan Abu Dawud* is the third main source in *hadith* collection and has been divided into five volumes. This source contains 4800 sound hadiths and collected by Abu Dawud Sulaymān ibn al-Ashʿath al-Azdi as-Sijistani (d. 275 AH, 888 CE).
- *Jami al-Tirmidhi*, this collection contains 3956 *hadiths* and has been divided into fifty chapters. This *hadiths* source was collected by Abu `Isa Muhammad ibn `Isa at-Tirmidhi (d. 279 AH, 892 C.E). This source is classified according to the *hadith*s, such as Purification, Prayer, Poor-due and fasting.
- *Sunan al-Sughra (Sunan al-Nasa'i)*, contains 5270 *hadiths* including repeated narrations and has been divided 6 volumes. It was collected by al-Nasa'i (d. 303 AH, 915 CE)
- *Sunan ibn Majah*, collected by Imam Muhammad b. Yazid Ibn Majah al-Qazvini (*Ibn Majah*) (d. 273 AH, 887 CE) This collection contains over 4,000 hadiths in 32 books divided into 1,500 chapters (*abwāb*)

Muslim approach to *hadith* in contemporary time

It is known that the investigation of Islamic sources in the West had started since 1250. In the 1800, Quran-oriented researches started heading towards criticising the hadiths and questioning the authenticity of the hadiths. This questioning periodically continued onto the later centuries and has influenced the Islamic world.[13]

[13] M. Said Hatiboğlu, *Hadis Tedkikleri* (Ankara: Özkan Matbaacilik, 2009).p,47-54

Looking at the chronological order, it is observed that this kind of criticism has been alive in the Islamic world. Therefore, it will be an important point to focus on the history of the ongoing criticism of hadith. Thus, the changes and the similarity of the criticisms will be seen as a statistic.

As mentioned above in Significance of the Study the sceptical approaches and critical works on religious values in the West have also affected Muslim intellectuals and researchers. Because of these influences Muslim intellectuals focused on *hadiths* and *sunnah*. However, before anything else, it is of great benefit to know the thoughts and opinions of the first generation of Muslims in order to clearly understand matters such as establishing, recording, referring and compiling *hadith*. Lack of knowledge in these matters and processes render Muslims rather exposed to the influences of works and excessive critical comments stemming from the West—thus raising uncertainties in their minds and causing the emergence of views based solely on the Qur'an, disregarding *hadith* and *sunnah*. Viewing the Qur'an as the only reference source can be seen as the main cause of the critical approach to *hadith* and *sunnah* coming to the forefront.

In this regard, Albayrak asserts that, in contemporary period, those who are secular-minded, agnostic or devout Muslims maintain the need to interpret the Qur'an in the light of contemporary issues and situations. He summarises typical approaches emerging in modern days in the following way:

> Modern understanding of Islam is Qur'an-centred; religious matters must be solved primarily with references to the Qur'an alone. In view of this understanding, a sceptical approach to religious sources other than Qur'an has emerged. The first element of the target of the said scepticism and criticism is none other than *hadith* and *sunnah*.[14]

Others also point to the sceptical approach developed in the Western scholarship of Islam toward *hadith* transmitters constituting a cause for rejection of *hadith*. With the influence of these tendencies, trapped between tradition and modernism, and

[14] Ismail Albayrak, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Tefsir Anlayışı* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 26.

distanced from their own value system, a new class of contemporary Muslim intellectuals emerged.

The Muslim world did not stay indifferent to the sceptical and critical thoughts in the field of *hadith* and *sunnah*, and answers and refutations were authored immediately. Muhammad Abu Shahbah (b. 1914) authored his work titled *Difa'un 'an al-Sunnah*, considered as the first of its kind, as a refutation to efforts affected by a new thought stemming from the non-Muslim scholars to discredit *hadith*. Besides this, there are countless articles and refutations published in Egypt in defence of *hadith* and *sunnah*. We also see similar literature in various part of Muslim world. For instance, according to Görmez and Özafşar,[15] refutations of disparaging views on *hadith* began to appear only after the 1950s in Turkey. This was due to the fact that no serious work was carried out in the discipline of *hadith* until this time.[16]

Among the first scholars who raised the issues of *hadith* criticism and rejection within the Muslim world were Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d.1898), Mawlawi Charagh Ali (d.1895), Abd Allah Chakralwi (d.1930), Mawlawi Ahmad al-Din Amritsari (d. 1948) and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905). According to Sayyid Ahmad Khan[17], who appears to have been seriously affected by *hadith* criticisms, the nature of *hadith* can be summarised as follows:

> 'Not all speeches of the Prophet are revelation. He executed many works in his life as a statesman, not as a Prophet. The six most famous *hadith* collections (*al-Kutub al-Sittah*) contain many forged *hadith*s. Words in *hadith* collections belong to narrators, and they mainly represent the accounts of daily lives and views of the first few generations of Muslims. All *hadith*s contradictory to Qur'an, human intellect and experience must be rejected.'[18]

[15] Mehmet Görmez and M. Emin Özafşar translated Muhammad Abu Shahbah's work, *Difa'un 'an al-Sunnah*, into Turkish (*Hadis Müdafaası I*) and expressed these views in the preface.
[16] Muhammed Ebu Şehbe, *Hadis Müdafaası 1*, Mehmet Görmez, M. Emin Özafşar, Önsöz (Ankara: Rehber Publishing, 1990).p, 23–33.
[17] Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, vol. 1 (Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).p, 34-54
[18]Mustafa Dönmez, "İslam Dünyasinda Hadis Inkarcilari ve Görüşleri," https://dusuncetarihi.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/islam-dunyasinda-hadis-inkarcilari-ve-gorusleri.pdf

Mawlawi Charagh Ali holds similar views and explains his understanding of *hadith* this way:

> The orders and guidance of the Prophet are of temporary nature. Most of the words attributed to the Prophet in *al-Kutub al-Sittah* are fabricated. Practising according to these *hadith*s, is, in fact, acting contrary to reason and conscience. The Prophet did neither leave behind a legal system nor any suggestion in that regard. He wanted Muslims to establish their own civil laws and the basis of their religion according to the needs of the time.[19]

Muslim thinkers began reflecting on *hadith* along the same line as modern revisionist scholars. While some of them accepted the thoughts and scepticism without questioning, others added them to their repertoire of thinking after a rigorous process of explaining.

The effect of positivist-rationalist logic is apparent in Muhammad Abduh's thoughts, who holds a relatively rationalist approach and argues for the Qur'an to be taken as the sole source (which has to be interpreted according to the needs of the time) and that conceivable principles ought to be brought to the forefront. He offers a rationale similar to those displayed by Sayyid Ahmad Khan and others.[20]

There are also contemporary Muslims who hold the same or similar views: Ahmad Din (d. 1908), Tawfiq Sidqi (d. 1920), Ahmad Amin (d. 1954), Hafiz Muhammad Aslam Jarajpuri (d. 1955), Ahmad Parwiz (d.1964), Abu Rayyah (d. 1970), Fazlur Rahman (d. 1982), Ghulam Ahmad Parwiz (d. 1985), Mahmud M. Taha (d. 1985) and Muhammad Ghazzali (d. 1996). For example, regarding *hadith*, Mahmud M. Taha says, 'The Prophet's words and approvals are not *sunnah*, but they constitute *shari'ah*, which is limited by time; and, *shari'ah* is only applicable during his time.'[21] Ahmad Amin says, 'The number of *mutawatir* (soundest) *hadith*s is no more than seven. *Hadith*s are not reliable as they were kept in memories for a long

[19] Ibid.
[20] Zuheyr Huseyin, "Muhammed Abduh Kimdir (1849-1905)" in " M. Hilmi Baş" (2015), http://www.islamdusuncesi.net/muhammed-abduh-1849-1905-187h.htm
[21] Dönmez, "İslam Dünyasinda Hadis Inkarcilari ve Görüşleri".

time without written records. *Hadith*s were fabricated even during the early centuries of Islam.'[22] Similarly, Abu Rayyah states, '*Sunnah* was not written during the early centuries of Islam and Abu Hurayrah is a character who forged *hadith*s,' and gives the following explanation, *'hadiths* have no sanction on an individual for taking or leaving something, no sin is committed by such an action.'[23] An important point is that most of these views present similarities in terms of condescending *hadith* approaches—almost like copycats of each other or their non-Muslim counterparts.

Fazlur Rahman, who is considered one of the pioneers of the reformist school in contemporary Islamic thought, exhibits a structure of thought similar to Goldziher's and Schacht's. We can consider his opinion of *hadith* through the following statement:

> Because there were only a few prophetic *hadith*s in the early period, the great majority of them originated from later generations rather than the Prophet himself. That is, most of the *hadith*s were formulated after the time of the Prophet; therefore, the textual contents of *hadith*s cannot be attributed to the Prophet.[24]

Clearly, there is a strong tendency among Muslims whose approaches to the *hadith* are very critical. Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to claim that majority of Muslims' view is in tune with this revisionist approach.

Here, in summary, it is necessary to draw attention to the ideas of Muslim scholars who do not accept the criticism of *hadith*. Muhammad Mustafa al-Azami, which knows the Western world, is a researcher that makes an important contribution to *hadith* science and the defending of the *hadith*. Upon to the criticism of *hadith* in Schacht's work, which is known as the *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, he wrote a refutation, known as *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudunce*.

[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Fazlurrahman, *Tarih Boyunca Islâmi Metodoloji Sorunu (Islamic Methodology in History)* (Ankara: Ankara School's Publications, 1995).p, 47

He responded with scientific Islamic sources to Schacht's claims about the *sunnah.* Along with that, Pakistani Ahmad Hasan also wrote a refutation, known as *The Early Development of Islamic Jurispurudence* (Islamabad, 1988) against Schacht's work. Besides this, upon the criticism of *hadith*, Mehmed Said Hatiboglu in return as an answer wrote his work *Batıdaki Hadis Çalışmaları Üzerine* (*Hadith Studies in the West)* (1992); Ali Osman Ateş, *Oryantalistlerin Hz. Peygamber'le ilgili iddialarına cevaplar (The Orientalists' answers to the allegations about the Prophet)* (Istanbul, 1996); Ali Dere, *Oryantalistlerin Hadis'e Yaklaşımları (Orientalists' Approach to Hadith)* (Ankara, 1999).[25]

As an answer to the indexed criticism of the Qur'an and *hadith*, Muhammad Asad (1900-1992) wrote his piece of work known as *Islam at the Crossroads* (1934); and *The Road to Mecca* (1954). Huseyin Nasr (d.1933), accepts the *hadith* criticism as a distort to the original structure of Islam. Moreover, Sayyid Khutup (1906-1966) accepts Muhammad Asad's thoughts, and concentrates on the fact that these *hadith* criticism is not a positive work that is done and that it damages Islam.[26]

Literary Works about Fethullah Gülen

There exists an abundance of works on the Hizmet movement. Conferences and symposiums organised especially during the last ten years produced a great number of academic-quality publications. Despite Gülen's authorship of 77 books, there is a lack of works related to his intellectual qualities, Islamic identity and religious teaching methods.[27] However, the few individual attempts that have been

[25] G.H.A Juynboll, *Oryantalistik Hadis Araştırmaları, Makaleler*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2001).p, 21-22
[26] Robert Irwin, *Oryantalistler Ve Düşmanları*, trans. Bahar Tırnakcı, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007).p, 315-318
[27] Ali Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2002).p,16

made lately cannot be ignored. In this connection, it is beneficial to briefly mention some of the works on Gülen's understanding of Qur'anic exegesis and *sunnah*.

Suat Yıldırım has written extensively on Gülen, including his views on Qur'anic exegesis and *sunnah*. In his work titled *Fethullah Gülen'in Kur'an-ı Hakim'e Yaklaşımı* [*Fethullah Gülen's Approach to the Wise Qur'an*], Yıldırım deals with Gülen's distinct approach and commentaries that offer potential solutions to some contemporary social problems. Rather than providing a traditional introduction of the Qur'an, Yıldırım draws attention to Gülen's interpretation through which valuable contributions have been made to Islamic disciplines and scholarly works. He also points to Gülen's work *Kur'an'ın Altın İkliminde* [*In the Golden Climate of the Qur'an*] and suggests this work possesses the quality to be used as lecture notes in graduate and post-graduate programs within faculties of religious studies.[28]

Another work on *tafsir* is Ismail Albayrak's *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Tefsir Anlayışı* (*Fethullah Gülen Hodja Effendi's Understanding of Qur'anic Exegesis*). Albayrak focuses mainly on Gülen's approach to the methodology of Qur'anic exegesis and compares him with other important modern Muslim intellectuals. Albayrak has also edited another book regarding Gülen`s exegetical, theological, mystical, legal thoughts and *hadith* discipline called '*Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times: Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*'. Faruk Beşer, a Turkish theologian, analysed Gülen`s understanding of Islamic jurisprudence in one of the books known as '*Hocaefendi`nin Fıkhını anlamak*' (*Understandig of Gülen`s Islamic Jurisprudence*). Here Beşer summarises Gülen's expertise of jurisprudence in the light of legal judgement (*fatwas*) given by Gülen since early years of 1970s. Finally it is worth mentioning that there is another book edited by Hamza Aktan entitled '*Bir Alim Potresi: Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi' (The Potreit of One Alim: Fethullah Gülen*

[28] Suat Yıldırım, *Fethullah Gülen'in Kur'an-ı Hakim'e Yaklaşımı* (Istanbul: Nil Publications, 2011).p, 42.

Hocaefendi). The contributors of this edited book have dealt with Gülen's expertise of Islamic disciplines from various perspectives. There also some psychological and sociological analysis in this work.

Literary Works Regarding Fethullah Gülen's View on *Sunnah*

The first work published on Gülen's understanding of *hadith* and *sunnah* is Ibrahim Canan's (d. 2009) work titled *Fethullah Gülen'in Sunnet Anlayisi* (*Fethullah Gülen's Understanding of Sunnah*). This is a noteworthy analytical work in this field, which is also very relevant to this study. In his work, Canan draws attention to an important point about Gülen's understanding and evaluation of *hadith*. According to Canan, Gülen prefers to use *hadith* related to actions and practices and not theoretical *hadith*.[29] Canan proposes that Gülen does not only approach *hadith* as a scholar, but he also considers them as an intellectual who endeavours to discover how they should affect a Muslim's daily life. Canan's view may be assessed from the point of Gülen's selection of *hadith*, and considered as one of the reasons behind his choice of *hadith*. However, there may also be other reasons for Gülen's preference in *hadith*. All of these issues will be dealt with in this research.

It should be noted that Canan confined himself to providing brief information about Gülen's acknowledgment of the importance of the discipline of *hadith* and his profound knowledge on the qualities of traditionists. He points to the characteristics of the traditionists and narrators (which is a point of focus for sceptical and critical thought), and emphasises their qualities of learning and memorising.[30] However, Canan falls short of presenting sufficient details on Western intellectual views about the subject and Gülen's views on non-Muslim critical Islamic thoughts. Nevertheless, he specifically highlights Gülen's work titled *Sonsuz Nur-3* (*Infinite Light-3*) as an

[29] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 67-94.
[30] Ibid.p, 84.

answer to scepticism based on *hadith* and *sunnah*. There is a serious need for analysis and commentary to clarify and fill the gaps left by Canan.

The issue of the genre of *rijal* (criticism of *hadith* narrators and transmitters) not receiving adequate treatment may be considered as another outstanding point in Canan's work. The discipline of *rijal* is a vital field of knowledge in the transmission of *hadith*, which is also a focal point of academic interest and criticism for scholars and intellectuals in the modern era. Gülen's knowledge in this field will be studied and analysed in this study. Canan briefly touches on Gülen's views concerning the issue of the correlation between *hadith* and revelation—a subject of debate among Muslim scholars—and suggests that, according to Gülen, *sunnah* is connected to revelation.[31] Gülen, who is an advocate of the divine origin of the *sunnah*, has been mentioned in Canan's work as being criticised for using weak *hadith* in his discourses. However, although Canan provides detailed information on the classification of *hadith* from the authenticity point of view, he does not explain why and under what circumstances Gülen resorts to such a practice.[32] This study will attempt to explore the rationale and wisdom behind Gülen's approach to the so-called weak *hadith*.

In a brief assessment of Canan's work titled *Fethullah Gülen's Understanding of Sunnah*, Faruk Tuncer describes Gülen as a scholar with authority in the discipline of *hadith*.[33] He states that Gülen is a notable *hadith* critic who can analyse and evaluate a *hadith* from its narrators and chain of transmission perspectives, as well as from its textual point of view (*matn* critique). Tuncer emphasises that no criticism of any one of the fundamental principles within *hadith* methodology, assertion or

[31] Ibid.p, 86.
[32] Ibid.p, 117-133
[33] The full text of this article can be accessed at www.fgulen.com

defence of any modern view contrary to Islamic tradition can be encountered in Gülen's works.[34]

An article on Gülen's understanding of *hadith* was authored by Halim Çalış. He draws profiles from Gülen's life and points to his influence within academic circles. For example, Çalış cites Ali Bulaç's statement, '[He] exhibits a profile of intellectual-scholar,'[35] to refer to the level of Gülen's knowledge of Islamic and modern sciences and his ability to combine them harmoniously.[36] In his article, while providing some general information about *hadith* and *sunnah* and citing the definitions of these terms, Çalış omits Gülen's views on these definitions, which is central to this study. This study will attempt to fill this gap by giving full treatment to Gülen's views on the transmission and codification of *hadith* since the time of the Prophet.

Çalış highlights Gülen's 'special interest' in *hadith* related to the prediction of events that may occur in the future. The issue of interest is to identify the motives behind Gülen's selection and interpretation of *hadith*, in particular regarding prophecies about the future. Çalış does not provide any explanation on the reasons behind this special interest. This study will explore the reasons behind Gülen's selection of this kind of *hadith*.

Çalış also investigates Gülen's modern interpretation of *hadith*, his contribution to the teaching of *hadith* and his approach to problems with regard to *hadith* arising in our time. Again, there is a lack of detail on what Gülen proposes in terms of resolving these problems. He also mentions Gülen's attribution of great importance to the correlation between Qur'anic verses and *sunnah* when explaining *hadith*. This reflects Gülen's view of the Qur'an and *hadith* as two elements

[34] Faruk Tuncer, "Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı," Article,(2007), http://fgulen.com/tr/fethullah-gulenin-butun-eserleri/cag-ve-nesil-serisi/fethullah-gulen-isigin-gorundugu-ufuk/255-fgulen-com-turkce/basindan/Kose-Yazilari/2007-Kose-Yazilari/14324-Dr-Faruk-Tuncer-gyvorgtr-Fethullah-Gulenin-Sunnet-Anlayisi?hitcount=0

[35] Scholar and writer Ali Bulaç's views on Fethullah Gülen: www.fgulen.com

[36] Halim Çalış, *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*, Fethullah Gulen's Thoughts on Hadith (New York: Published by Blue Dome Press, 2011).pp, 39–63.

supplementing each other. However, Çalış' article does not provide any information in this regard.

The book '*Bir Alim Portresi' (The portrait of one Scholar)* edited by Hamza Aktan has many chapters from different researches in academia. Osman Guner analysed Gülen`s approach to defence of *hadith* in this area. The article is entitled '*Oryantalistlerin Hadis Hakkındaki İddialarının Kritiği: Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi Örneği'* (*The critics of Orientalist`s claim regarding hadiths; the path of Fethullah Gülen).* Güner points that the *hadith* is recorded by companions according to Fethullah Gülen. According to him, Gülen expresses that the claims about hadiths being recorded in the aftermath are not founded on substantial sources. It is observed that whilst analysing Gülen's views, Güner does not touch upon his efforts to prove the reliability of *sunnah* through comparing it with today's scientific knowledge.

Zeki Sarıtoprak; in his article '*Fethullah Gülen's Teology of Peacebuilding*', stresses on Gülen's thoughts on the notion of peace, presenting his ideas through excerpts from his written work. However, he does not include quotes and comments that refer directly to the *sunnah* itself. Towards the conclusion of the article, Sarıtoprak implies that Gülen's ideology is founded on the earliest period of Islam and the Quran[37]

on the one hand, Ismail Acar analyses Gülen's understanding of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) in his article named '*A Classical Scholar with a Modern Outlook: Fethullah Gülen and His Legal Thought*'. Throughout this article, Acar brings clarity to Gülen's way of *ijtihad* and his standpoint in the field. He emphasises Gülen's idea of a qualified committee being established to address *fiqh* related modern day problems yet to be resolved. In order to do this, he uses parables from Gülen's *fatwa*'s; an example of which is Gülen's indication that punishing a wrongdoer does not belong to a person but rather to the legal authorities. Whilst analysing Gülen's

[37] S.M. Yusuf, *The Sunnah-Its Development and Revision,Hadith and Sunnah* (Malaysia: Percetakan Zafar Sdn.Bhd.(Co.No. 97878-H), 2008).p,170-187

outlook and understanding of *fiqh*, Acar also points to his proficiency regarding *sunnah*.[38]

An important academic work pertaining to Gülen's teaching, *Gülen's Teaching Methodology in His Private Circle*, has been authored by Ergun Çapan and published in a book titled *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*—a book compiled at academic-level with scholarly articles on Islamic disciplines. In his article, Çapan cites books Gülen teaches in the areas of *hadith*, Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence and its methodology, Sufism, Arabic grammar and theology. In addition, Çapan mentions Gülen's knowledge on Qur'an and *hadith*, and major works in principal Islamic disciplines (i.e. exegesis, biographies, jurisprudence, Sufism and theology). He also explains how Gülen teaches these books to his students through a specific method.[39] In this study, Gülen's methods will be analysed from the point of new elements he introduced into *hadith* teaching.

Çapan's article is of great importance as it provides an inventory of books taught by Gülen. Since Çapan was a pupil of Gülen's, his article is much more than a mere academic exercise. In effect, it provides the reader an opportunity to study the views of an insider in a clear way. However, the article is not adequately analytical. Since Çapan had to deal with a series of other topics along with *hadith*, he did not provide much comment relevant to this study. As such, this study will attempt to fill in the remaining gaps.

Electronic sources

Finally, the following websites provide information on Gülen and contain all of Gülen's works, views and what others think of him.

[38] Ahmet Yucel, *Hadis İstilahlarinin Doğuşu Ve Gelişimi* (Istanbul: Marmara University, Faculty of Theology Publications, 1996).p,65-84

[39] Ergün Çapan, *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar* Gülen's Teaching Methodology in His Private Circle (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2011).p, 132-151.

- http://www.fgulen.com/en/
- http://www.fethullahgulen.org/tr/
- http://www.youtube.com/FGülenTR
- www.asringetirdigitereddutler.net
- www.cagvenesil.com
- www.fasildanfasila.net
- www.fgulen.com
- www.herkul.org
- www.inancingolgesinde.net
- www.infinitelight.org
- www.irsadekseni.com
- www.kalbinzumruttepeleri.com
- www.kirikmizrap.net
- www.kurandanidrakeyansiyanlar.com
- www.mquran.org
- www.olcuveyayoldakiisiklar.com
- www.pearls.org
- www.pmuhammad.com
- www.ruhumuzunheykelinidikerken.com
- www.sonsuznur.net

Methodology

Research on Islamic disciplines in the Muslim world and the West mainly focuses on various philosophical, sociological and textual methods. It is safe to say that there is a serious crisis in methodological approaches to the Muslim sources. Since our main sources are texts, philosophically and ontologically speaking we will tend to approach these sources from a subjectivist perspective rather than objectivist or more correctly empirical perspectives. Epistemologically speaking, instead of following an objective epistemological approach (this type of epistemology considers that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exist as such apart from the operation of any consciousness), we prefer the line of the constructivist epistemology which means that the reader or researcher herself or himself constructs the reality. So there are no fixed realities and the truth depends on the reader's engagement with the realities in this world. Meanings are not invented or discovered but constructed.[40] On

[40] M. Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process.* Singapore: Printed in KHL Printing Co Pte Ltd, 1998.p, 8-10.

the basis of above mentioned theoretical approach, we mainly focus on the interpretative way in our thesis.

There are various ways to interpret the text but here two of them are given priority. In this field content analysis and critical (discourse) analysis are accepted as essential. Bernard Berelson, who is known for his early work on content analysis, summed up his thoughts on this method as: "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and qualitative description of manifest content of communications."[41] Therefore, content analysis is a social science methodology that is based on an understanding of human communication, including writing and context. This includes understanding the meaning of text, phrases used, key terms, authenticity and authorship.[42] In essence, this method summarises ideas as: an emphasis to draw accurate boundaries of the subject; a determination of specific words and the criteria of the subject; a detailed description of the subject; a course of history; sensitivities to be considered of the subject; reviews in the course of history; the influence of comments; and results revealed. It also elucidates contemporary reviews and their consequences. The purpose of this methodology is to be able to measure the frequency of keywords to determine the most important structures of the writing.

With this method, it may be possible to emphasise the reviews that are appropriate for our topic, the course of history of *sunnah*, reviews about *sunnah*, and effects of it. Contemporary Muslim scholars' who follow the ideas of their predecessors and modernist intellectuals' understandings of *sunnah* may be examined in detail, their works can be reviewed, compared and summarised. Gülen's understanding of *sunnah* and new reviews will be outlined. The terminology Gülen used in his writings in relation to the *sunnah* of the Prophet will be analysed in the

[41] B. Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (New York: Free Press, 1952).
[42] "Content Analysis and Communication through the Written Language," http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/pdfs/guide61.pdf

light of content and discourse analysis. His interpretation in respect of *salaf,*[43] a subject of this thesis, will be discussed in detail.

Understanding the text and comments and reaching new conclusions will be achieved through the principles of critical thinking, reading actively rather than passively, internalising and interpreting for detail and generating questions. In this way, as a result of reading, it is possible to determine the reliability of the scientific sources and interpretations, their relationships to other sources and the sciences that they generate as a whole. Understanding the scientific sources' degree of accuracy and proven reliability depends on serious critique and research. Through questioning and review based on the method of critical analysis, it is possible to investigate the reliability and accuracy of text and sources of historical resources to reach new insights and theories.

This method is based on accessing accurate information, generating important questions and searching for answers that are able to critically analyse the scientific text and resources, investigate comments and theories about these questions and evaluate them. The data obtained directly or indirectly as a result of this research meets the needs of the century. Another principle of the method is extracting irrelevant topics and questions, concentrating on the main critics of the subject and investigating the issue further. When it comes to discourse analysis, the researcher focuses on three different dimensions of discourses and their interrelations, namely the text itself, the productive and receptive practices surrounding of the text, and the sociocultural environment that surrounds all of them. Gülen has not written in a void but in a particular sociocultural context. Thus discourse analysis of his writing sheds

[43] "Early Muslim" in traditional Islamic scholarship means someone who died within the first four hundred years after the Prophet, including scholars such as Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

great light on his principle approach to the *hadith* literature and the usage of this literature in his close circle and broader social context.

At this stage it is worth emphasising the importance of the analyses of the literature by source-critical methods in Islamic studies. As we mentioned before, many non-Muslim scholars depict serious scepticism towards classical Islamic sources and prefer to include evidence relevant to contemporary non-Arabic literature and material remains such as the findings of archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics to evaluate and re-write the history of Islam. Depending upon non-Islamic sources extensively to describe what happened in the history of Islam is quite an alien methodology for many Muslims and even for some non-Muslim students of Islam. This sceptical approach is called "revisionist" whereas those approach which trust Islamic sources is called the "traditional" school. [44] Because the methods these two schools prefer are different, the conclusions they reach are also different. In this study, principally we will adopt the traditionalist school's approach to the Islamic sources.

The impact and consequences of Western interpretations and perceptions of these two methods has been examined in relation to Islamic studies research topics such as identification of resources, recognition of sources, critique of their reliability, understanding different views and elucidation of Islamic literature.

Primarily known as the Salaf period, through the life-time of the Prophet, into the era of the registration, revision and codification of the *hadith* and *sunnah* by the companions and following generations, and the formation of reliable knowledge and corpus of *hadith*, this historical epoch is considered an important time-frame of the Islamic tradition. However, in the last few centuries, Muslim intellectuals, who use the examples of non-Muslim scholars' work and their approaches to *sunnah*, have

[44] J. Koren and Y. D. Nevo, *Methodological Approaches to Islamic Studies* (Amherst NY: Der Islam, 1991).p, 87-107.

been exposed to reading sceptically and critically. This has resulted in the emergence of different ideas about *hadith-sunnah* inside and outside of the Islamic world. So, *hadith* and *sunnah* are being seriously questioned as a source.

From a different perspective, however, it is important to emphasise the great difference between Muslim and non-Muslim methodologies which have developed over the years. Muslim scholars in general absorb and readily accept most previous approaches and methodologies in reasoning and acceptance of sources. Conversely, Western scholars are more inclined towards critical and analytical assessments of sources, reliability of transmitters, reasons for revelation and authenticity at the expense of disregarding very well established methodologies of Muslim scholarship.

This research project will review Gülen's approaches to and assessment of modernist thought of *sunnah*. It will review any convincing answers in the face of critical new approaches. In particular, Gülen's responses to criticisms and doubts about the compilation of *hadith* recordings and *sunnah* will be discussed. What are Gülen's attitudes and views about the relationship between revelation-*hadith* of Western and modern scholars' concepts? There are also some scholarly studies about Gülen's familiarity with the science and disclosures of *hadith*. These issues will be examined due to importance of knowing Gülen from those aspects. We also question whether Gülen follows a specific methodology in his writings or not.

A general goal of many scholars is the identification of individual and social needs in the present era and then finding solutions to the problems of the century. Solving these problems, along with other resources of Islamic disciplines, are considered essential and accepted. Can Gülen, an Islamic scholar and spiritual leader of a worldwide movement, offer *hadith*- and Quran-oriented solutions to Muslims in particular, but to all of mankind's problems? It is important and essential to research

this issue. In recent years some studies have exhibited positive approaches, although they do not offer detailed information. In this study, Gülen's approaches to the selection of *hadith* and *sunnah* in terms of education and solving problems, which *hadith* have been given priority, which issues have been examined in depth and the procedures used will be analysed in detail.

In the direction of these studies, it will be pointed out that Gülen provides discourses and statements on how to evaluate *hadith* in accordance with the terms of the century. This thesis primarily focuses on his *sunnah*-oriented evaluations and responses to expectations of modern sciences, women in Islam, education, terrorism and many other social problems. On this occasion, the *hadith* that are scattered in his works will be analysed for his understanding of *sunnah* and to find out more about his new reviews and analysis. Critical and content analysis methods will be frequently used.

Briefly, this thesis will analyse Gülen's view of the world, the effect of changes in the social structure rather than the interpretations in other disciplines, his understanding of *hadith* and *sunnah*, and his original contributions and evaluations. Gülen has ventured into areas rarely discussed by other scholars who have failed to come to the defence of the practicality and relevance of the prophetic *sunnah* to contemporary society.

Chapter One: *Hadith* in Islam and its importance.

Hadith and s*unnah* (prophetic tradition) as primary sources in Islam

Islam is based on two fundamental sources. The first is the Qur'an, which consists of the various length verses (*ayahs*) and chapters (*surahs).* According to Muslims, Qur'anic texts are the direct, unaltered and updated version of God's words

that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad within the twenty three years of the revelation. The Prophet subsequently taught and dictated them to his companions. The second source, mentioned after the Qur'an, is *hadith*.[45] The *hadith* also known as the *sunnah* (prophetic tradition) as a second primary source in Islamic legislation, after the Qur'an and is a commonly known and accepted norm among Muslim scholars.[46] This has been accepted fact since the early period of Islam, in terms of reference and interpretation, for *hukm* (legal ruling) and *mu'amalat* (transactions and dealings). One of the key reasons for this classification lies in the famous words of the Prophet: 'I have left two matters with you. As long as you hold to them, you will not go the wrong way. They are the Book of Allah and the *sunnah* of His Prophet'.[47]

In addition, the primary source of Islam, the Qur'an, also contains proofs and evidence (*dalil*) in determining the *hadith* and *sunnah* as legal sources: 'if you are to dispute among yourselves about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if indeed you believe in God and the last day'.[48] According to Muslim scholars, this particular verse of the Qur'an, in terms of determining and solving a problem, ordains primarily God and, immediately after that, the Prophet as the main points of reference. There are a number of similar verses in the Qur'an establishing the prophetic traditions as a second primary source in Islam.[49]

Regarding the Prophet there are two very important concepts in the Qur'an: *nabi* (prophet) and *rasul*[50] (messenger). A close examination of the Qur'anic usage of these two terms will shed light on the relation of *hadith* and the prophetic mission toward humankind. A prophet's duty as a *nabi* is to invite people to believe in the

[45] Abdur Rahman I Doi, *Hadith an Introduction* (USA: Kazi Publications, 1980).p, 15.
[46] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*.p, 11.
[47] Malik ibn Anas. *Muwatta*, Book 46, Number 46.1.3
[48] Qur'an 4:59.
[49] Qur'an 5:92
[50] In Islamic terminology 'Rasul' was used for Prophet who brought a new *Shariah* (Codes of law) while those Prophets who did not bring any new *Shariah* and followed the *Shariah* of a previous 'Rasul' were called 'Nabi'. That`s why 'Rasul' is higher than 'Nabi.'

fundamental principles set by Islam.[51] From the Qur'anic perspective, this is cited under three main topics: *tabligh* (conveying the divine message), *tabyin* (making clear, explaining) and *tatbiq* (practicing).[52] Clearly, the understanding of these verses, their teaching and implementation would be realised by the representation and explanation of the Prophet. While some figurative verses dictate belief in *ghayb* (unseen), other verses[53] enjoin more concrete issues such as transactions and dealings. In other words, in terms of implementation, some *mujmal* (unclear/ambiguous) verses necessitate clarification. Verses that relate to prayer (*salah*) are very good illustrations of this ambiguous form. In these verses,[54] times of prayers and numbers of bowings and prostration are not mentioned explicitly. Other similarly ambiguous verses[55] require the explanation and actions of the Prophet. At this point, prophetic tradition comes to the fore to play an expository and applied role.

Definition of *hadith*?

Hadith, which is an Arabic word derived from the word *hadatha*, literally means "a new one". In its infinitive form, *tahdith*, it means to inform or talk about something. *Hadith* as a noun means narrative or news. The word *hadith* has been mentioned in the Qur'an, in multiple senses, in 23 different verses. The word *hadith* (announcement) in this verse of the Qur'an, '[t]hen maybe you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement,'[56] has been used in the sense of 'narrative' or 'news' referring to the Qur'an.[57] In the verse 'God sends down in parts the best of the words as a Book fully consistent in itself,'[58] the word *hadith* means message or announcement and book. The word *hadith* in the

[51] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*.p, 12.
[52] Suat Yildirim, *Kuran-ı Hakim Ve Açıklamalı Meali* (Istanbul: Işık Publications, 2006).p, 87.
[53] Qur'an 2:3, 2:33, 3:44, 3:179, 6:50, 10:20, 11:123.
[54] Qur'an 2:238, 2:177, 2:110, 4:55, 6:72, 7:170.
[55] Qur'an 19:31, 20:132, 33:33.
[56] Qur'an 46:6.
[57] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*., 9. In another verse, 'and as for the favour of your Lord, proclaim it' (Qur'an 93:11) the word *tahdith* has been used.
[58] Qur'an 39:23.

verse, '[w]hen you meet such [people (O Messenger)] as indulge in (blasphemous or derisive) talk about our revelations, turn away from them until they engage in some other talk'[59] is used in the sense of subject or discourse.[60]

According to Arabic linguistic sources, the word *hadith* carries the meaning of 'new' as opposed to 'old'. The word also refers to 'story' and 'report', and is often used by *jahiliyyah* (pre-Islamic era) Arab poets in reference to these meanings. With the advent of Islam, this word was used in relation to the words and actions of the Prophet. [61] The early companions and Muslim scholars have reserved this word for this context.[62]

The usage of the word *hadith* by the Prophet in reference to his own speeches specifies its meaning. A *hadith* narrated by Abu Hurayrah provides an example:

> I said: 'O God's Messenger! Who will be the luckiest person, who will gain your intercession on the Day of Resurrection?' God's Apostle said: 'O *Abu Hurayrah*! I have thought that none will ask me about it before you as I know your longing for the (learning of) *hadith*s. The luckiest person who will have my intercession on the day of resurrection will be the one who said sincerely from the bottom of his heart 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah' (*La ilaha illallah*)[63].

In Islamic terminology, although *hadith* generally refers to the words of the Prophet, some Muslim scholars have ascribed meanings to this term in the context of different Islamic disciplines. On the one hand, according to the scholars of *'usul* (juristic methodologies), *hadith* refers exclusively to the speeches, actions and declarations of the Prophet. With this usage, the word *hadith* becomes synonymous with the term *sunnah*. On the one hand, some scholars of *hadith* also use the term for reports (*khabar*), *mawquf* (a narration attributed to a companion) as well as *maqtu'* (a narration attributed to a successor). When assessed from this point of view, the term *hadith* carries the meaning of reports. Yet, other scholars of *hadith* restrict the term to

[59] Qur'an 6:68.
[60] M. Mustafa Al-Azami, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Plainfield,USA: American Trust Publications, 1997).p, 30.
[61] Zubayr, *Hadith Literature İts Origin, Development &Special Features*.p, 52.
[62] Ibid, 51.
[63] Bukhari, *'Ilm*, 34, *hadith* no. 98

refer to the traditions of the Prophet, and define the narrations attributed to companions and followers as reports.

Taking into account these meanings attributed to the term *hadith*, specialists engaged in this field are called *muhaddith* and those who are engaged in the field of transmission of historical and other narrations are given the title *akhbari* (one who gives *khabar*—news).[64]

Looking at Islamic literature in general, it can be observed that the term *hadith* has been used exclusively to refer to the speeches, actions and declarations of the Prophet.[65] While scholars of methodology and scholars of *hadith* differ to some extent in defining the term *hadith*, nevertheless they agree on a similar purpose. However, a glance into the views and opinions expressed by non-Muslim researchers and some contemporary Muslims—e.g. Fazlur Rahman is known to have this opinion—will reveal that *hadith* is not only employed to refer to the sayings and actions of the Prophet, but also to designate customs and traditions. For example, G. H. A. Juynboll uses *hadith*, in general terms, to refer to 'customs and traditions', which describes its real meaning as the words and actions of the Prophet.[66]

Relationship between *hadith* and *sunnah*

An accurate determination of the relationship between *hadith* and *sunnah* necessitates a clear understanding of the meanings of each of these two terms independently. It is only through this method that the meanings in common can be correctly understood.

The word *sunnah* is derived from an Arabic root, *snn*, which is normally used to refer to an issue gaining certainty, absolute accuracy of news, its continuity and

[64] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*.p, 10.
[65] Ibn al-Salah al-Shahrazuri, *An Introduction to the Science of the Hadith*, trans. Eerik Dickinson (UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2006).
[66] G. H. A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Archive, 1969).p, 17

advancement in that direction. It is also understood that the derivation is from another Arabic word, *sanan*, which is used in the sense of 'an open, straight path without hindrance.' Hence, with these meanings, the word *sanan* is used synonymously with *sunnah*. Another meaning attributed to the word *sunnah* is 'behaviour'.[67] Along with these meanings, the word *sunnah* also refers to 'a way—in the sense of both good and bad—that is followed, *sirah* (biography), and community'.[68] Here, the usage of 'bad' in discourses refers directly to actions the Prophet regarded as unacceptable and frowned upon by Muslims, as any negative or non-beneficial deed would not be considered as *sunnah* in the first instance. As one of the qualities of prophethood in Islam is *'ismah* (immunity from sin), Prophet Muhammad and all other prophets are regarded as protected and free from sins. In al-Fayumi's (770 AH) work, *al-Misbah al-Munir*, and al-Jawhari's (1002 or 1008) *al-Sihah*, the word *sunnah* was mentioned as being used among pre-Islamic Arabs synonymously with *hadith* in reference to 'traditions, courses and customs of the forefathers'.[69] According to these explanations, *hadith* and *sunnah* are therefore derived from root words that have close meanings with different nuances. With the advent of Islam, the usage of these two words—which Arabs had been using synonymously since the Age of Ignorance—has been reserved for the utterances, actions and approvals of the Prophet, and the acceptance of this usage by the majority of Muslim scholars, since the early days of Islam, strengthens the claims of their synonymity.

In the Qur'an, the word *sunnah* is used in various verses in the form of '*sunnah of Allah*' (God's Way),[70] '*sunnah al-awwalin*'[71] and '*sunan*'[72] in reference to

[67] Yusuf, *The Sunnah-Its Development and Revision,Hadith and Sunnah*.p, 103.
[68] Mustafa Genç, "Vahiy Sünnet İlişkisi" (Konya, Selcuk University. Theology Faculty, 2005).p,11
[69] Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Muqri al-Fayyumi, "Al-Misbah Al-Munir Fi Gharib Al-Sharh Al-Kabir," (2009), http://art.thewalters.org/files/pdf/W590.pdf.
[70] Qur'an 33:38; 48:23; 17:77.
[71] Qur'an 35:43.
[72] Qur'an 3:137; 4:26.

'law, ruling, wisdom, obedience and method'.[73] Similarly, it occurs in the Qur'an in the sense of 'invariable laws, commandments and clear facts.' In this connection, the use of *sunnah* by scholars of *hadith* and *fiqh* in reference to a 'path to follow, law, custom, safe and secure way' is noteworthy. Shafi'i[74] also accepted the *sunnah* as the words and actions of the Prophet.[75] When considered in terms of these definitions and views, *sunnah* consists of all actions and avoidances of the Prophet that were transmitted and demonstrated regardless of their legal basis for transactions. According to Hanafites, *fardh* (obligatory), *wajib* (necessary), *sunnah*, *mustahab* (recommended) and *adab* (ethical norms) are all inclusive. In other words, *sunnah* is the Prophet's character (*shama'il*), lifestyle and biography (*sirah*).[76]

When taking all this into consideration, the close relationship of the meanings of *hadith* and *sunnah* is remarkable. For example, Koçkuzu says, '*hadith*, in the terminology of *hadith* scholars, is the written form of words, actions, affirmations and qualities ascribed and attributed to the Prophet'.[77] Muhammad Abd al-Azim al-Zarqani's and Husayn al-Qudsi's use of *hadith* and *sunnah* interchangeably is significant.[78] Further, Talat Koçyiğit elucidates this unity of meaning between *hadith* and *sunnah*, 'in early period, everything stemmed from the Prophet, in the form of speech, action and approval, were established as his *sunnah*' and in the Qur'an: 'He does not speak on his own, out of his own desire; that (which he conveys to you) is but a revelation that is revealed to him'.[79]

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[73] Genç, "Vahiy Sünnet İlişkisi." p,11–12.
[74] Abu ʿAbdillah Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i was a Muslim jurist and scholar (150-204 AH). He was active in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and his teaching eventually led to the Shafi'i school of *fiqh* named after he died. He is often called Imam al-Shafi'i in Islamic literature and fiqh.
[75] al-Sarakhsi, *'Usul al-Fıkh*, I, 113
[76] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 111.
[77] Ali Osman Koçkuzu, *Rivayet Ilimlerinde Haber-I Vahitlerin Itikat Ve Teşri Yönlerinden Değeri* (Ankara: Religious Affairs Directorate Publications., 1988).p, 19.
[78] As-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abd al-'Azim al-Zarqani, *Manahil Al-Irfan Fi Ulum Al-Quran*, vol. 2 (Beirut-Lebanon: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 2001).
[79] Qur'an 53:3.

Looking at the understanding and definitions of *hadith* and *sunnah* among later period scholars shows they use the term *sunnah* synonymously with *hadith*, while jurists assert that *sunnah* consists solely of the words, actions and affirmations transmitted from the Prophet. However, according to scholars of *hadith*, *sunnah* has a terminological meaning more comprehensive than that which is accepted by scholars of methodology, in which *sunnah* encompasses all speeches and actions of the Prophet including those before his prophetic mission. Thus, the term *sunnah* is equivalent to *hadith*.[80] In light of all these explanations, it can be asserted that the terms *hadith* and *sunnah* are generally used synonymously, but in some cases, *sunnah* gains more weight in reference to actions, while *hadith* is used to refer to verbal narrations; this is among the strongest views.[81]

From this perspective, *hadith* and *sunnah* are classified under three categories: verbal, practical and tacit approval. Verbal *sunnah*, by the scholars of *'usul* and *hadith*, is a statement uttered by the Prophet on any subject. Thus, all *hadith* beginning with '*Qala Rasul Allah*' fall under this category.[82] With these *hadith*, the Prophet explains some *mujmal* (ambiguous) or *mughlaq* (obscure) verses from the Qur'an, providing their full meaning and purpose, making them easier to understand and facilitating their application in practical life. Hence, all these explanations together are called *hadith* as verbal statements, which form an integral part of *tafsir* (exegesis).

Practical *sunnah*, or *hadith*, comprises the actions of the Prophet, conducted privately or in the presence of others, to show practical examples to his people of how to perform their religious duties. These news or traditions have been transmitted by the companions through narratives. For example, news and narratives like 'the

[80] Talat Kocyigit, *Hadis Usulu* (Ankara: Ankara University Publishing House, 1987).p, 15.
[81] Mahmut Aveder, "Hadis Ilmi," (2008).p, 1.
[82] Kocyigit, *Hadis Usulu*.p, 16.

Prophet used to pray his *salah* in this particular way,' 'he used to make ritual ablution using these actions,' 'he used to pay alms at this rate and give charity in this amount using this method' and 'during this particular prayer, he used to recite these chapters from the Qur'an' indicate the practical *sunnah* of the Prophet.[83]

From time to time the Prophet was asked for his opinion about certain deeds of his family and companions. He sometimes approved these actions and allowed them to be practised by keeping silent or corrected them and showed another way; at other times he disapproved of them by way of his instructions or actions. The Prophet's manner of approval or rejection of some actions in this way is called *taqriri sunnah* (*sunnah* by tacit approval). Derived from this meaning, the legal decisions of the companions on matters with no clear ruling in the Qur'an and *sunnah* are also defined as *taqriri sunnah*.[84] This view is accepted by scholars of *hadith* and methodology alike.

As a result, it appears that *sunnah*—as word, action and tacit approval—has become another form of expression of *hadith* so long as it is transmitted from the Prophet. The assessments of scholars of *hadith* and jurists point towards the integrity of meaning, which developed around the notions of *hadith* and *sunnah* since the early period of Islam. With these assessments, it can be concluded that *hadith* and *sunnah* refer to the same meaning – prophetic tradition – and they can be used interchangeably; however, in some instances, *hadith* can be used to refer to verbal traditions, while *sunnah* is confined to actions. In respect of meaning and representation, both words present a unique system of life that was demonstrated by the Prophet. Hence, all the meanings of the Qur'an, clear and obscure, can be read in the light of *sunnah*.

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid. 15–16.

Hadith as the second primary source

A prophetic tradition is an inspiration revealed by God to His prophet. The *sunnah* of the Prophet is one of the sound primary sources of the religion of Islam and has an extremely important place in the foundation and development of different Islamic disciplines. In accordance with Muslim scholars, by decreeing in this verse, '[w]hoever disobeys God and His Messenger has evidently gone astray,'[85] God makes it clear that the authority of establishing any legal doctrine belongs exclusively to God and His messenger.[86] Muslims believe that the boundaries of *halal* and *haram* (lawful and unlawful) have been established by God and explained in detail by the Prophet.

Muslims hold that keeping these sensitivities in mind and acting accordingly will not only help individuals and societies to avoid deviation from fundamental laws of life, but also to uphold the integrity of the Islamic disciplines. By weighing their thoughts and theories on this scale of sensitivity, human beings can freely express themselves and embark upon a wide range of quests without the risk of transgressing boundaries. This can open up new horizons for those who ponder, thus facilitating development of new theories and syntheses in disciplines of physical and religious realms. It can be safely said that, in Islam, the discipline of *hadith*—after the Qur'an—constitutes the foundation layer of the science of jurisprudence and all other secular and religious disciplines.

With the advent of Islam, the understanding and development of jurisprudence was formulated due to the norms and practices of the companions and those who are close around the presence of the prophet on a daily basis. In this manner, the family members around him as well as his foremost companions could observe him and formulate in their memories how the prophet went about the daily chores in his life.

[85] Qur'an 33:36.
[86] Abu Zahw M., *Hadis Ve Hadisçiler* (Istanbul: Ensar Publications, 2007).p, 31.

The fundamental issues, as well as controversial ones, that become the subject of Islamic jurisprudence have been resolved and clarified in light of the Prophet's statements. Some of these rulings have manifested themselves as matters in direct relation to individuals, families and the wider community. For example, knowledge and rulings on questions related to family life, such as women's rights, respect for women and women's issues, have been explained to Muslim women by the Prophet's wives, thus becoming norms of life. It is noteworthy to mention A'ishah, one of the Prophet's wives, who occupies an exceptional place in Islam in terms of her understanding of the Qur'an and prophetic tradition on matters concerning the family and women.[87]

The love, respect and tolerance that constitute the base of the family unit are just as important as jurisprudence and family rights in Islam. At the same time, it is clearly mentioned that there is no place for hatred in a family environment. In fact, hatred between couples is a major cause for divorce, which is a permissible but disliked act in Islam.[88] Furthermore, the Qur'an and prophetic tradition have put the family in place as the cornerstone of a stable Islamic societal structure.

Further, the duties and responsibilities of officers and administrators employed by the state are explained in the light of *sunnah*, and rules and regulations are established. Hence, it can be observed that most rights and responsibilities at individual, family and state level have been established by means of *sunnah,* which fundamentally stems from the Qur'an, paving the way for an Islamic social system and governance.

The fundamental bases of the discipline of jurisprudence, such as *ijtihad* (legal decision), *qiyas* (analogy) and *ijma'* (consensus), have also been developed by means of the Prophet's teachings and training, and a multitude of ambiguous legal issues

[87] Saliha Akgül, *Ezvac-ı Tahirat* (Istanbul: Gül Yurdu Publishing, 2007).p, 53.
[88] Abu Da'wud, *Kitab al-Talaq*, *hadith* no. 2172, 2173

have been solved in the light of the Qur'an and *sunnah*. The training examples provided by the Prophet have been liberally used by Muslim scholars as needs arose, thus becoming instrumental in the formulation of many legal rulings. For example, concerning a person eating or drinking as a result of forgetfulness while fasting, Abu Hanifah (d. 772 CE), alluding to *qiyas*, said: 'If there did not exist any narrative, I would rule by means of analogy.'[89] Nevertheless, he referred to *hadith* related to this issue and based his *fatwa* (legal opinion) on that *hadith*. The narration Abu Hanifah was referring to is a *hadith* related by Abu Hurayrah, in which the Prophet is reported as saying: 'If anyone forgets that he is fasting and eats or drinks he should complete his fast, for it is only Allah Who has fed him and given him drink.'[90] This *hadith* clarifies an issue that was not mentioned clearly in the Qur'an. While explaining the role of *hadith* and *sunnah* in legislative process, Imam Shafi'i purports that matters that are not clearly mentioned in the Qur'an are adjudged by means of the Prophet's deductions (*ijtihad*). While this type of *sunnah* is considered a matter of controversy among a number of Muslim scholars, according to the majority of other scholars, and particularly scholars of *hadith*, the *sunnah*, having originated from a Godly source, can have a legislative power under certain circumstances. As a result, the *sunnah* also has been accepted as an independent source of law.[91]

In view of these opinions of Muslim scholars and *hadith* authorities, the *sunnah* becomes an integral part of physical and spiritual life in Islam. Adherence to the *sunnah*, particularly in the individual, family and social spheres, plays an effective corrective role. Muslims believe it is only in this way that a healthy society, as it was in the time of the Prophet, can be achieved. Undoubtedly, following the prophetic tradition is most valuable, especially at times when innovations are prevalent. In a

[89] Abdullah Kahraman, "Fıkhî Hadislerin Doğru Anlaşılıp Yorumlanması Hususunda Bazı Esaslar," *Eski Dergi*(n.d), http://eskidergi.cumhuriyet.edu.tr/makale/316.pdf
[90] Bukhari, *Sawm* 26; Muslim, *Siyam* 171; Tirmidhi, *Sawm* 26; Abu Da'wud, *Sawm* 39
[91] Kahraman, "Fıkhî Hadislerin Doğru Anlaşılıp Yorumlanması Hususunda bazı Esaslar".p, 4.

time when the society is corrupt, complying with even a small matter of prophetic tradition signifies a powerful *iman* (faith, belief) and *taqwa'* (consciousness of God), because following the *sunnah* directly recalls the Prophet and, ultimately, that recollection and remembrance is transformed into recollection of God. Emulating the Prophet's conduct even in the least significant dealings—i.e. his manner of eating, drinking, sleeping or similar habitual, natural acts—becomes a meritorious act of worship in compliance with Islam. For a Muslim, such commonplace actions are nothing less than adherence to the Prophet's tradition and considered as conduct of the Islamic way of life. With the satisfaction of following the *sunnah* and turning their heart to God, the True Lawgiver, a believer gains a perpetual sense of God and worship.[92]

Technical terms for various types of *hadith*

In order to properly understand *hadith* and its status, it is necessary to briefly mention certain terms used in the classification of *hadith*. The term *mutawatir (consecutive) hadith* refers to a successive narration that is transmitted by a significant number of narrators where it is inconceivable they could have agreed upon a falsehood. This condition must be accrued at every level. Because of the very high standards of authenticity required, only a limited number of *mutawatir hadith* exist. Being considered as definitely authentic, the rejection of a *mutawatir* (consecutive) *hadith* is regarded as unreasonable and its acceptance becomes a necessity.

Sahih (authentic) *hadith* refers to the soundest *hadith*, which has no missing links in its chain of *sanad*, all its narrators are *siqah*, and it contains no defect or irregularities. In other words, from a technical point of view, this is a *hadith* that belongs to the Prophet beyond any reasonable doubt.

[92] Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Lemalar* (Istanbul: Şahdamar Publishing, 2007).p, 63.

A *sanad* (chain of narrators) that contains one or more narrators who have the qualities of *'adl*, but have some weaknesses in their ability of *dabt*, would lower the rank of the *hadith* to *hasan*.[93] A *hadith* by narrators who do not have the qualities of those who narrated *sahih* or *hasan* (good) *hadith* is classified as *da'if* (weak). A *hadith* narrated by a weaker *rawi'* in contradiction of a *sahih hadith* by *thiqah rawi'* is called *munkar*. If a *hadith* has a continuous chain of *sanad*, going back from the last *rawi'* to the first, reaching a well-known companion and then the Prophet, it is classified as *musnad* (supported)[94].

A fake or fabricated *hadith* is called *mawdu'*, which, according to some scholars, is the lowest degree of *da'if hadith*. According to another view, *mutawatir* and *mawdu' hadith* are not subject to study for the simple reason that the former are definite and the latter fabricated. There are many technical statements related to the topic, but will not be focused on because it's not a topic concerning the thesis.

Development of *hadith* literature

Recording of *hadith* in the time of the Prophet

Looking at historical documentation, it is evident that the recording of *hadith* dates back to the time of the Prophet, although serious efforts for the compilation of *hadith* were not started until the beginning of the 2nd century AH. Furthermore, Islam being a way of life, all deeds and words of the Prophet were taken into account by the companions and practised in their daily lives.

Besides the group of people called *'ahl al-suffah*, who dedicated their life to learning and teaching Islam, many other companions are thought to have memorised the *hadith* and *sunnah* of the Prophet and committed to writing as much as they could,

[93] *Ḥasan* term is used to describe *hadith* whose authenticity is not as well-established as that of *ṣound hadith*; but it is used as evidence Islamic sciences.
[94] The early scholar of *hadith*, Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Hakim, defines a *musnad* (supported) *hadith* as:A *hadith* which a scholar of *hadith* reports from his *shaikh* whom he has apparently heard *hadith* from at an age conducive to that, and likewise each *shaikh* having heard from his *shaikh* until the *isnād* reaches a well known Companion.

even with limited resources. It can be assumed that memorisation was more prominent than writing due to Arab literature, well-established in the Arabian Peninsula, which helped the companions build a strong memory.[95] The literate ones of the companions recorded the *hadith* they learned on any material they could find, which included a piece of leather, wood or date leaf. Some of the companions safeguarded these recorded materials and compiled them into small booklets called *sahifah*. *Al-Sahifah al-Sadiqah* of Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As and *al-Sahifah* of Hammam ibn Munabbih comprising *al-Sahifah al-Sahihah* of Abu Hurayrah are the most famous among them.[96] The companions' learning and teaching of *hadith* was encouraged by the Prophet. In a *hadith*, the Prophet said, 'May Allah brightens a man who hears a tradition from us, gets it by heart and passes it on to others.'[97] This *hadith* and many others of similar[98] import may have been amongst those that served as a legal source of reference for the companions—and the generations to come—for safeguarding and conveying the prophetic traditions.

In the time of the Prophet, the prophetic traditions were open to discussion among the companions, who had the opportunity to approach the Prophet directly and clarify any matters. Or if a companion erred while reporting a *hadith*, he would be corrected immediately by another. In this way, *hadith* and *sunnah* were continuously checked and confirmed. Even the companions who lived outside Medina, when experiencing difficulties in terms of understanding a *hadith*, used to travel long distances to come to Medina and see the Prophet for clarification.[99] This case set a precedent, in the

[95] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*.p, 20.
[96] Ibid.199
[97] Abu Da'wud, *'Ilm*, 10; Tirmidhi, *'Ilm*, 7; Ibn Majah, *Muqaddimah*, 18; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 4/82
[98] In another *hadith*, he said, 'May God blesses a person who heard some discourse from us and then passed it on to others. How many persons to whom, our message is conveyed are there, who have more retaining faculty than those who receive it.' Abu Da'wud, *Sunan*, II, 289; Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, 1.104
[99] For example, 'Uqbah ibn al-Harith married the daughter of Abu Ihab b. Aziz and soon after learned that he and his wife were suckled by the same woman. 'Uqbah travelled from Mecca to Medina to clarify the matter and asked for a verdict directly from the Prophet. After obtaining the ruling, he returned to Mecca and divorced his wife. (Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, 1.30–31)

centuries to come, for undertaking months-long journeys in the pursuit of collection of authentic and healthy *hadith* from reliable transmitters.

However, especially during the last few centuries, many different arguments have been put forth in relation to the prohibition of writing down *hadith* during the time of the Prophet. Nevertheless, Ahmad Muhammad Shakir (d. 1958), a well-known Egyptian Muslim traditionalist, asserts that *hadith* prohibiting writing down the traditions were abrogated by those permitting writing.[100]

One of the strongest pieces of evidence of the prophetic traditions being recorded in writing during the time of the Prophet can be found in al-Ramahurmuzi's (d. 362) work titled *al-Muhaddith al-Fasl bayn al-Rawi wa al-Wa'i*, which is considered one of the most important and comprehensive works on the subjects of *hadith* methodology and *hadith* history. In this work, al-Ramahurmuzi includes 48 narrations permitting the recording of prophetic traditions in writing during the time of the Prophet, while he mentions only eight narrations that are related to the prohibition of writing down *hadith*. Tirmidhi compiled narrations related to the permission and prohibition of writing *hadith* under separate topics.[101]

On the basis of documented and authentic evidence Muslims have no doubt that the prophetic tradition has been recorded, memorised and safeguarded since the time of the companions, the followers and the generation that followed; these records have been transmitted from one generation to the next, and compiled into corpus.[102]

Prohibition on writing *hadith*

The main motive behind the early generations' endeavour for learning and safeguarding the traditions of the Prophet was that the *hadith* and *sunnah* were their only guide in putting the Book of God into practice. However, the first and foremost

[100] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*. p, 99-104
[101] Ibid. 102
[102] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Sonsuz Nur(Infinity light), Sünnetin Tespiti Ve Teşrideki Yeri* (Izmir: Nil Publications, 1994).p, 135

reason for safeguarding the *sunnah* was the Qur'an's—as well as the Prophet's—encouragement to follow his example.[103] The following verse constitutes strong evidence for this:

> Whatever the Messenger gives you accept it willingly, and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it. Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Surely God is severe in retribution.[104]

Because of the clear instructions in this *ayah* and many others of this import, the companions considered the *sunnah* as an invaluable trust and did not want to lose any part of it; thus, they wrote it down or committed it to memory.

There are also some reports that the Prophet prohibited his companions from writing the traditions down while they were so deeply committed to recording the Qur'an. The most eminent *hadith* is transmitted by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (d. 63/682 or 64/683), who reported the Prophet as saying:

> Do not write anything from me except the Qur'an, and whoever has written something from me except the Qur'an, he should erase it. Narrate to others (what you hear) from me; and whoever deliberately attributes a lie to me, he should prepare his seat in the fire.[105]

Following these narrations, companions who wanted to write down *hadith* were prevented from doing so by these reports. The case of Zayd ibn Thabit (d.660 C.E.) preventing Mu'awiyyah (d. 60 AH) from writing down *hadith* is a good example of this.

The majority of the scholars who studied the reports of banning the writing of *hadith*, and tried to reconcile the arguments, came up with this result: Writing down *hadith* was banned only in the early period of Islam due to the fear that *hadith* could

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[103] Muhammed Accâc el-Hatîb, "Sünnetin Tesbiti," in "Harun Karipçin," (2010), http://www.herkul.org/kitap-ozetleri/suennetin-tesbiti/

[104] Qur'an 59:7

[105] Muslim, *al-Zuhd wa'l-Raqaa'iq*, 5326
In another *hadith*, Abu Hurayrah narrates, "The Prophet came to us while we were writing Hadīth and asked, 'What are you writing?' We replied, 'Hadīth that we heard from you.' He said, 'A book other than the book of Allāh! The nations before you deviated because they wrote other books alongside the book of Allāh.' We asked, 'Can we narrate from you?' He said, 'Yes, you may narrate from me; that is fine. However, those who knowingly lie about me should prepare their abode in the fire." Ahmad, *al-Musnad*, vol.17, p.156

be mixed up with the Qur'an, and that people would incline more towards *hadith* and neglect the Qur'an.[106] The main objective was the preservation and publication of the Qur'an and keeping it clear from all kinds of doubts and confusion. Pages and booklets (*sahifah*) had been written by the companions since the early days, and these pages posed a real risk of being mixed up with the Qur'an.

However, after mentioning the reports for and against the compilations coming from the companions and the successors, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d.463 AH-1071 CE) states the lack of juristic qualification among the majority of Arabs, their inability of distinguishing Qur'anic words from others, and their risk of taking any word that may creep into Qur'an as the word of God as the main reasons for the prohibition of writing down *hadith*.[107] Ibn Qutaybah, (276 AH) on the other hand, stresses that the banning of *hadith* compilation was specifically for those who could not write well, as in the early days of Islam the written form of the Arabic language was not sufficiently developed. Therefore, those who could not write well or whose religious knowledge was limited could not be considered free from the risk of making mistakes when writing down *hadith*, causing confusion and weakening interest in the Qur'an. This is why the Prophet prohibited these people from writing down *hadith* and permitted those who could write well.[108]

Taking these comments into account, prohibition of those who did not possess good writing skills from writing down *hadith*, may bring to mind the question of why writing down the verses of the Qur'an was permitted. This point further strengthens the argument of the likelihood of mixing up *hadith* with the Qur'an, if the simultaneous writing down of *hadith* was permitted.

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[106] Accâc el-Hatîb, "Sünnetin Tesbiti".
[107] Al-Khatib, *Taqyid al-'Ilm*, 57.
[108] Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'wil al-Mukhtalif al-Hadith*, 365.

Permission for writing *hadith*

Following the prohibition of writing down *hadith*, there are numerous reports regarding the permission given by the Prophet to keep records of his *sunnah* in writing. The number of narrations giving permission to write down *hadith* is much greater than the narrations that prohibited it, and in fact, it can be said they abrogated the banning reports. It appears the banning of writing down *hadith* was only temporary, due to the fear of the words of men creeping into the Qur'an, and, as soon as this risk was removed, the Prophet granted permission to his companions to record his traditions. This is supported by a number of authentic narrations. However, Goldziher and some other Western scholars, basing their arguments on the prohibition of compilation of *hadith*, assert that *hadith* were written under the decree of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Aziz, (d. 682 CE / 63 AH) 100 years after the death of the Prophet.[109] 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr narrates this instance:

> I used to write everything which I heard from the Prophet. I intended (by it) to memorise it. The Quraysh prohibited me saying: do you write everything that you hear from him while the Prophet is a human being: he speaks in anger and pleasure? So I stopped writing, and mentioned it to the Prophet. He signalled with his finger to his mouth and said: Write, by Him in whose hand my soul lies, only right comes out from it.[110]

There are also many other reports which support the views of those who say the Prophet permitted his companions to write down the hadith.[111]

As mentioned earlier, some of the companions and successors kept records of *hadith* in small booklets called *sahifah* (pages). Others like Hammam used to spend

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[109] Ghulam Nabi Falahi, "Development of Hadith Aconcise Introduction of Early Hadith Literature," (n.d), http://muqith.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/development-of-hadith.pdf

[110] Sunan Abi Dawud 3646, in Book; Book 26, *Hadith* 6

[111] Someone from among the *ansar* (helpers) came to the Prophet, and said: 'O Prophet! I hear a word from you; I like it, but I cannot memorise it.' The Prophet, signalling his hand, said: 'Get help from your right hand (write)' (al-Khatib, *Taqyid al-'Ilm*, 65–66.); Anas ibn. Malik reports from the Prophet as saying: 'Record knowledge by writing.' (Imam Zayn al-Din Ahmad ibn Ahmad al-Sharji al-Zubaydi (d. 893), *Tajrid al-Sarih*, 1/44); When the Prophet was delivering his speech on the day of victory over Mecca, Abu Shah, a Yemenite, stood up and said, 'O Prophet! Get it [speech] written for me.' The Prophet said, 'Write it for Abu Shah.' (Bukhari, *'Ilm*, 39; idem, *Luqatah*, 7; Abu Da'wud, *Manasiq*, 89; idem, *Diyyah*, 4; Tirmidhi, *'Ilm*, 12.).

most of his time with Abu Hurayrah and write down every *hadith* he narrated. According to Muslim sources, once he narrated a *hadith* to Abu Hurayrah, but he said: 'I do not remember this one.' Hammam then brought the book where the *hadith* was recorded and persuaded Abu Hurayrah. These pages were published by the late Muhammad Hamidullah (d. 2002). Scrutinies and carbon analysis of these pages proved them to be 13 centuries old. This fact is considered by majority of Muslims only one of the proofs of *hadith* being recorded in a sound and healthy manner. The *hadith* on these pages are included in the *Musnad* of Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855 CE/241 AH) together with in reputable *hadith* collections, such as *Bukhari* and *Muslim*.[112]

The two prominent companions and the first two caliphs, Abu Bakr (d. 634 CE) and 'Umar b. al-Khattab, (d. 644 CE) are also known for their endeavour to write down *hadith*. Indeed, there are reports that Abu Bakr wrote down 500 *hadith*, which he heard directly from the Prophet and later on destroyed for fearing to be mistaken.[113] 'Umar ibn al-Khattab consulted the companions on the subject of compilation of *hadith* and reached the conclusion that it was a reasonable idea. Later he abandoned this idea due to some concerns.[114]

Besides all these examples, letters from the Prophet to the kings, emperors and other rulers of the neighbouring states are well known historical diplomatic documents. These letters are also accepted as a written form of *hadith*. Furthermore, there exist hundreds of written texts, invitations, treaties, appointments of state officials, job descriptions, land records, land revenues, safety and security, and reference letters, most of which were recorded during the period of the Medina city

[112] Nurullah Agitoğlu, "Hadislerin Tedvini," *Yeni Ümit* 85 (2009).
[113] Al-Dhahabi, *Tadhkirah al-Huffaz*, I.5.
[114] Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, III.1, 206; al-Khatib, *Takyid al-'Ilm*, 50; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Jami' al-Bayan al-'Ilm*, I.64; Al-Suyuti, *Tanwir al-Hawalik Sharh 'ala Muwatta' Malik*, 6.

state.[115] A close look into these documents makes it clear there is no doubt on the accuracy of the writing, compiling and transmitting of the prophetic tradition.

Veracity of the companions in recording of *hadith*

Understanding the Qur'anic messages perfectly was an extremely important matter for the companions. It was for this reason that every word and action of the Prophet was discussed among the companions and written down on any medium available to them at that time. This is how Anas ibn. Malik (d. 711 CE) describes the companions' fastidiousness on this subject: 'We used to hear a speech from the Prophet whilst we were sitting with him, and as soon as we left him, we used to talk about and discuss it among us'.[116] This report clearly indicates there were always some people around the Prophet observing and recording his words and deeds. Thus, *hadith* were subject to discussion and recorded for safekeeping. Those which were doubtful and those which were not understood properly were vigorously discussed among them and confirmed through sound and reliable witnesses. If clear understanding was not possible, the Prophet was approached for clarification. Because of this sensitivity of the companions, the preservation and transmission of the prophetic traditions in their original form—to minute details—represented the most important task in their minds. It seems that they paid utmost attention to eliminate the risk of any incorrect word or false interpretation on their part blemishing the authenticity of the traditions.

The companions were a group of people who understood very well the meaning of the severe punishment for reporting a false statement from the Prophet, as well as the reward of a sound and healthy transmission. Thus, the seriousness of the study, safekeeping and narrating of *hadith* raised concerns among the companions regarding the transmission of traditions from the Prophet. The risk of being

[115] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*.p, 32–33.
[116] Muhammad 'Ajjaj al-Khatib, *al-Sunnah Qabl al-Tadwin*, 160.

condemned to eternal loss because of a distortion or alteration was the main reason for this reluctance.[117] It was due to these hesitations and concerns that Zubayr b. al-'Awwam (d. 656) reported only a limited number of *hadith*. When his son asked him why he reported only a few *hadith* from the Prophet, he replied, 'I was always with him (the Prophet) and I heard him saying 'Whoever tells a lie against me (intentionally) then (surely) let him occupy his seat in Hell-Fire''.[118] 'Ali b. Abu Talib, (d. 661 CE) who acted cautiously with regards to these *hadith*, said, 'Whenever I tell you a narration from the Prophet, by Allah, I would rather fall down from the sky than ascribe a false statement to him'.[119]

In the service of the Prophet who had been for a long time as a househelp Anas ibn. Malik, dedicated himself to the memorisation of *hadiths* of the Prophet. "Out of fear of committing error, I would have narrated more *hadith* from the Prophet"[120] Presented to the Prophet as a house aid by his mother, at an early age, he was brought up in the Prophet's household and served him for ten years. Paying attention—with extreme proficiency—to *Prophetic wisdoms* with the same fervour shown by the companions to memorise the verses of the Qur'an during their revelation. He did his best to commit as many *hadith* as he could to memory. That is to say, due to the fear of forgetting the verses while receiving them from angel Gabriel, the Prophet was repeating with his tongue after him. Due to the action of the Prophet using his tongue to memorise the verses, a verse was revealed in the Qur'an: '(O Prophet!) Move not your tongue to hasten it (for safekeeping in your heart)'.[121] Then it is explained in detail in another verse: '(for the guidance of humankind,) We will establish the Qur'an in your heart and have you recite (it to others), so you will

[117] Gülen, *Sonsuz Nur(infinity light), Sünnetin Tespiti Ve Teşrideki Yeri*.p, 63.
[118] Bukhari, *'Ilm*, 38; In another *hadith*, which supports the content and meaning of this *hadith*, the Prophet said, 'Whoever narrated a *hadith* from me which is seen as a lie then he is one of the liars'. (Muslim, *Muqaddimah*, 1).
[119] Bukhari, *al-Istitabah*, 6; Abu Da'wud, *Sunnah*, 28.
[120] al-Darimi, *Muqaddimah*, 25.
[121] Qur'an 75:16.

not forget (anything of it)'.[122] It is safe to assume that the attention and extreme care displayed by the Prophet to the verses of the Qur'an set an example for the companions—who realised the importance of *hadith* and *sunnah* in Islam—to preserve the prophetic tradition.

The companions' fear of committing mistakes gave rise to prefer each other for *hadith* narration. The anecdote which is noted by 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Layla (d. 83 AH / 702 CE) is worth quoting:

> I met and knew one hundred and twenty Companions; they all could sit in a mosque together; when they were asked something they knew, they would look at one another's face; while talking, with the fear of confusing Allah's Messenger's words, they would wait for someone to answer; when no one replies, one of them grits his teeth and by taking refuge in God narrates something with a warning like Ibn Mas'ud's words: "Look! I am transmitting something from my memory but you must know that the Prophet uttered something approximately in the same meaning or in close meaning or similar to what I told you."[123]

Besides the transmission of verbal traditions, the *sunnah*, which also required practical demonstration, were taught in detail with great care. The companions did their best in terms of diffusion of the practical *sunnah* in its authenticity.[124] For example, while performing ablution when he was in Kufah, 'Ali b. Abu Talib said, 'Anyone who would be pleased to see the Prophet's ablution should watch this. Even as you were watching this, I saw the Prophet. Showing this to you—in detail—pleased me'.[125] There are numerous examples regarding this kind of reports.[126]

Historically, the great efforts exerted by the Prophet's companions and the following generations in terms of reporting *hadith* verbatim, instead of reporting by meaning, cannot be denied. Yet, reporting *hadith* by meaning (*riwaya al-hadith bi al-*

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[122] Qur'an 87:6.
[123] Imam Shamsudin Muhammad b Ahmad al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam Al-Nubala*, vol. 12 (Beirut, Lebanon: Mu'assassat al-Risalah, 2014). v:4; p,263
[124] Aynur Uraler, "Sahâbe Uygulaması Olarak Sünnete Bağlılık " *Yeni Umit* 51(2001).: 247
[125] 'Abd al-Razzaq, *Musannaf* I, 38, 39; Ahmad b. Hanbal I, 158; Darimi, *Taharah*, 31; Abu Da'wud, *Taharah*, 51; al-Nasa'i, *Taharah*, 75.
[126] Again, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, a well-known companion of the Prophet, when people asked about the Prophet's way of washing his head while in the state of *ihram* (Special clothing used during the prilgimage periods), showed to them how to do it by washing his head and said, 'I saw the Prophet doing it like this' (Muwatta', *Hajj*, 4; Bukhari, *Jaza' al-Sayd*, 14; Muslim, *Hajj*, 91; Ibn Majah, *Manasiq*, 22; Abu Da'wud, *Manasiq*, 37; Nasa'i, *Manasiq*, 27).

ma'na) was permitted under certain conditions, such as within the whole context of a word (*sibaq* and *siyaq*).[127] However, when confronted with a *hadith* reported by meaning, the companions used to discuss it among themselves over and over again to ensure its accuracy.

In reference to this case Qatadah b. Di'amah (d736 CE) reported that: Abu Hilal, Shu'bah and Sa'id b. Abi Sadaqah used to go to Hisham al-Dastawa'i for arbitration when they fell into hesitation about a wording, e.g. 'did he say this or did he say that?'. Similarly, when Shu'bah and Sawri hesitated on something, they would approach to Mis'ar b. Kudam.[128] The narrators' high level of cautiousness was—at the same time—helping to prevent lies from creeping into *hadith*.

To ensure the sound and healthy transmission of *hadith*, the companions and the following generations investigated the lives of the *hadith* narrators in detail, and issued warnings about those with defect or doubtful background. For example, Zayd b. Abi Unaysah (d. 737 CE) said: 'Do not accept *hadith* from my brother.'[129] Likewise, Bukhari, who authored the first book about the companions, asked Ali b. al-Madini (d. 234 AH) —a man who is seen as the imam of the great traditionists like Muslim—'How is your father?' He replied: 'Don't ask me, ask others about him.' When questioned further, he said: '*Hadith* is religion, but my father is weak'.[130] *Rijal* works are full of this kind of anecdote.

While strict criteria were applied in writing and transmitting *hadith*, when confronted with difficulties, rigorous research and investigations were also carried out. From this point of view, the companions and followers are acknowledged as expert investigators. For example, during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, an old woman applied to the caliph for a share on the inheritance of her late grandson. The caliph

[127] Gülen, *Sonsuz Nur,(Infinity light) Sünnetin Tespiti ve Teşrideki Yeri*.p, 65.
[128] Ibn Hajar, *Tahzib al-Tahzib*, 2/395; Ramhurmuzi, *al-Muhaddith al-Fasil*, 395.
[129] *Sahih Muslim bi Sharh al-Nawawi*, Yahya b. Sharaf al-Din al-Nawawi, v.I, 12.
[130] Ibn Hajar, *Tahzib al-Tahzib*, 5/153; Ibn Hibban, *al-Majruhin*, 2/15.

said: 'I do not see a verse in the Book of God about your entitlement to a share, and also, I do not remember the Prophet saying anything on this.' Then, Mughirah b. Shu'bah stood up and said: 'The Prophet would give one-sixth share to the grandmother.' When Abu Bakr asked if there was anyone else who knew about this, Muhammad b. Maslamah (d. 666 CE) confirmed Mughirah b. Shu'bah's statement, saying: 'I also heard the same thing from the Prophet.' Abu Bakr gave the woman her share.[131]

Besides investigation, discussion, sensitivity against lies and authority in representation of verbal and practical traditions of the Prophet, criteria such as memorisation, style and truthfulness constituted a solid basis for recording and narrating *hadiths*.

Qualities sought in *Hadith* narrators *(Rawi)*

The meaning of *rawi'* in *hadith* terminology is a person—man or woman—who narrates or transmits a prophetic tradition together with its chain of transmitters.[132] The discipline of *al-jarh wa al-ta'dil* (injure and adjust)—which is associated with the narration and the narrator—is a discipline that seeks the best and perfect conditions in *hadith* transmitters. In other words, it is a branch of science that deals with and determines the necessary criteria for the sound transmission of *hadith*.

In the period of the Prophet, there was no doubt about the accuracy of the teaching and transmitting of the prophetic tradition. The control of the narrations' health did not present any problem because the Prophet was alive and among the companions. However, the events of sedition—which started soon after the Prophet's death and particularly after the assassination of Caliph 'Uthman b. 'Affan (d. 656 CE/ 35 AH)—raised concerns among the companions and followers who were engaged in the discipline of *hadith*. It was during this period that fraudulent *hadith* began spreading

[131] Dhahabi, *Tazkirah al-Huffaz*, 1/2; Tirmidhi, *Fara'idh*, 10.
[132] Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *al-Kifayah*, 97.

among the public. These false traditions, which were fabricated to cause turmoil, alarmed the companions and followers, and become the main factor in raising their sensitivity in *hadith* narration and teaching.

Under these circumstances, constituting a serious danger for the safeguarding of the prophetic tradition, the companions and followers undertook extra precautions and opted to accept *hadith* transmitted only by well-known chains of narrators. At the same time, they began scrutinising the narrators' reliability. In the *Muqaddimah* of Muslim's *Sahih*, Ibn Sirin confirms this:

> Previously they did not ask about the chain of narrators, but after the sedition started they began asking us the names of the transmitters in the chain. This way they were accepting *hadith*s transmitted by *ahl al-sunnah* (the people of the Prophetic tradition), and rejected the ones by *ahl al-bid'ah* (the people of innovation).[133]

These safety measures, adopted to protect the authenticity of the prophetic tradition, led to the birth of the discipline of censor and adjust, a branch of knowledge accepted as the criticism of *hadith* narrators. By means of certain rules and principles established under this discipline, *hadith* narrators were subject to reliability tests. Where a narrator fails to meet these criteria, the traditionists conclude they are not reliable and the *hadith* reported by them is not healthy. When a narrator is subjected to scrutiny under such strict conditions and accepted, their truthfulness and reliability, and the *hadith* they reported being free from lies, errors and negligence becomes evident. All those who do not meet these criteria—no matter how many *hadith* they memorised—are not qualified to narrate *hadith*. They can listen to and learn *hadith*, and practise them in their private lives, but they are not authorised to transmit them to others. The important point here is the ascertaining (*tathbit*) and recording (*dabt*) of the prophetic tradition in a sound and healthy way. Ascertainment and recording

[133] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*.p, 167–168.

constitute the first stage in this process, and are an important step in establishing trust for the authenticity of the prophetic tradition.[134]

The first quality sought in a narrator is to be a Muslim who has accepted Islam in their heart and mind. This necessitates belief in God, angels and the books, all the prophets sent by God, the Day of Judgment and predestination, as well as submission to God's decrees. A person who fails to meet this criterion cannot qualify for *hadith* narration.[135]

The second important matter is that the narrator must have reached the age of obligation (*mukallaf*). A child who has not reached the age of obligation is not subject to religious responsibility (*taklif*) and there is nothing to prevent that child from lying. However, there is no harm for an adult narrating a *hadith* they learned in childhood. The companions' consensus on the acceptance of narrations from certain youth, i.e. Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 692 CE) and Mahmud b. Rabi (nd), constitutes evidence for this. They based their acceptance on the following *hadith* narrated by Mahmud b. Rabi: 'When I was five years old, I remember the Prophet taking water into his mouth and throwing on my face.'[136]

The third important quality required in narrators is justice (*'adalah*). This means a person who has never lied in their life and is trusted by everyone. The Prophet's companions can be given as a good example of this. For a narrator, the quality of justice is more important than any other criterion. In the history of *hadith*, there are many people who had the quality of justice and narrated hundreds of *hadith* like Zayd b. Harithah (d. 629 CE), who was an emancipated slave, and Umm Maktum (d. 636 CE), who was blind.[137]

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[134] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*., 100.
[135] Şehbe, *Hadis Müdafaası 1*.p, 75.
[136] Bukhari, *Kitab al-Da'wat*, 31; Ibn al-Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, v.1, 189.
[137] Şehbe, *Hadis Müdafaası 1*.p, 76.

Another quality sought in a narrator to qualify them as acceptable is their ability to preserve the information safely. This is done in two ways. The first method is commitment to memory and is called *dabt al-sadr* (memorisation by heart). This is the narrator's ability of repeating a *hadith* with its chain of transmitters exactly as they learned from their mentor. The traditionists refused to accept *hadith* from narrators with a weak memory. They accepted *hadith* from only intelligent and trustworthy people, and rejected those with failing memory and who erred or expressed suspicion.[138]

The second method is the recording of *hadith* by writing down, which is called *dabt al-kitab* (recording in a book). When transmitting a *hadith*, the narrator must be able to present their book containing the *hadith* in its originality. However, scholars like Abu Hanifah and Imam Malik are opposed to transmission by writing.[139] Suleyman b. Musa said: "The traditionists used to say, 'do not accept knowledge from people who narrate from recorded pages rather than memory. Because they do not have the ability to differentiate between *hadith*s; they make errors in writing words; they make too many mistakes".[140]

Along with these criteria, other conditions, such as endurance, mien, homeland, family, birth and death dates, are required in a narrator to qualify. Naturally, *hadith* narrated by a person whose birth and death dates do not match the lifetime of the person from whom they narrate, or succeed in the chain of narrators, were rejected. Similarly, narrations by two people, placed successively in a chain of narrators, but geographically lived too far away from each other—the distance between not permitting them to see each other face to face—are not accepted.

[138] Ibn Athir *Jami' al-'Usul*, v.1, 72.
[139] Ibn al-Salah, *Muqaddimah*, 185.
[140] Ibn al-Muflih, *al-Adab al-Shar'iyyah*, v.2, 155

In the light of these explanations, it becomes evident that many traditionists—from the companions to the *muta'akhkhirin* (the later ones) —made vigorous criticisms within the discipline of injure and adjust. Ibn 'Abbas and Anas b. Malik, from among the companions, and al-Sha'bi and Ibn Sirin, from among the followers, are the most famous of them. There are numerous works in the discipline of injure and adjust. Ibn al-Sa'd's (d. 791 CE) 15 volumes work *al-Tabaqat* is one of them. Al-Suyuti (d. 1505 CE) abridged and published this work under the name of *'Ijaz al-wa'd al-Muntaqa min Tabaqat Ibn al-Sa'd*. 'Ali b. al-Madini (d. 848 CE)'s *Tarikh Ibn Hibban*—a book of ten section (*juz'*) on the suspicions of the historians. Also, Bukhari's *Tarikh*— and Ibn Kathir's *At-Takmil fi ma'rifat at-Thiqat wa dhu'afa' wa al-Majahil* are considered the leading works in this field.[141]

Interpreting the Qur'an by prophetic tradition (*sunnah* and *hadith*)

One of the qualities of God's prophets in Islamic theology is *fatanah*. Besides its literal meaning of 'intelligence' or 'shrewdness', in Islamic terminology this refers to the faculty of shedding light—with the aid of a heart and mind open to inspiration—on matters that are too difficult to grasp by ordinary human intellect and require detailed explanation. From one of its aspects, the word can be defined as prophetic logic and intuition. It is by means of this attribute that the prophets of God comprehended the contents and meaning of revelations, and explained them to their people in detail. This Qur'anic verse sums up the duties of the Prophet while pointing to his special ability of annotating the Qur'an:

> 'As We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, reciting to you Our Revelations, and purifying you (of false beliefs and doctrines, and sins, and all kinds of uncleanness), and instructing you in the Book and the Wisdom, and instructing you in whatever you do not know.'[142]

[141] Al-Salih, *Kitap al-Sulûk*, 82–83.
[142] Qur'an 2:151.

When explaining the duties and responsibilities of the prophetic office in light of the above verse, Muhammad Gazzali (d. 1111 CE) stresses that the job of the Prophet is to understand and explain in detail the provisions—stipulated in the scripture and pertaining to individual lives, social and state structures—that are rules combining wisdom and correctness within themselves.[143]

Qur'anic verses are generally categorised under several groups. Some verses are *mujmal* (ambivalent), some *mubayyan*, *sarih* or *mufassar* (with clear meaning), and some others *muhkam* (law-giving/perspicuous) or *mutashabih* (intricate/ambigious). The perspicuous and ambiguous verses are explained in the Qur'an:

> It is He Who has sent down on you this (glorious) Book, wherein are verses absolutely explicit and firm: they are the core of the Book, others being allegorical. Those in whose hearts is swerving pursue what is allegorical in it, seeking (to cause) dissension, and seeking to make it open to arbitrary interpretation, although none knows its interpretation save God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say: "We believe in it (in the entirety of its verses, both explicit and allegorical); all is from our Lord"; yet none derives admonition except the people of discernment.[144]

What is understood from 'seeking (to cause) dissension' and 'seeking to make it open to arbitrary interpretation' in this verse is that the judgment of God's verses and decisions on unclear matters should be left to the Prophet.

Verses with clear-cut meaning do not normally require further explanation for understanding or making judgment. For instance, the verse, 'those (the God-revering, pious) pray: "Our Lord, we do indeed believe, so forgive us our sins and guard us against the punishment of the Fire,"'[145] has a clear meaning and plainly refers to the state of truly pious people. However, ambivalent and intricate verses are not easy to comprehend; they give only brief and ambiguous information, and refer to the Prophet for detailed explanations. Only God and those who are gifted by God with knowledge and wisdom can know the meaning of *mutashabihat* verses.

[143] Gazzali, *Tafsir on the Qur'an* 2007,p, 145.
[144] Qur'an 3:7.
[145] Qur'an 3:16.

The traditions of the Prophet fulfil various functions such as delivering, clarifying and interpreting the commands in the Qur'an; they expand and explain (*tafsir*) what is implicit (*mubham*), and particularise or specify (*takhsis*) what is general (*'am*). At the same time, they confirm (*ta'yid*), strengthen (*ta'kid*) and complement (*itmam*) some of the provisions in the Qur'an and make judgments on behalf of the Qur'an. When the Qur'an and prophetic tradition are evaluated as a whole, the ordinances' confirmation—rather than contradicting—of each other becomes plainly evident. However, according to Hanafite jurists, under certain circumstances, the prophetic tradition may abrogate some rulings in the Qur'an[146] For example, the following verse commands the believers to perform ritual ablution each time they stand up for prayer: 'O you who believe! When you rise up for the Prayer, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and lightly rub your heads and your feet up to the ankles.'[147] This may sometimes present Muslims some difficulties. Nevertheless, the religion gives preference to ease, and at the same time, recommends to simplify and ease matters. The following prophetic tradition, which clarifies the issue, minimises the ruling to a level almost akin to abrogation:

> Sulayman b. Buraydah reported on the authority of his father who said: 'The Prophet of God offered prayers with one ablution on the day of Conquest (of Mecca) and wiped over the socks. 'Umar said to him: "You have today done something that you have not been accustomed to before." He (the Prophet) said: "O 'Umar, I have done that on purpose."[148]

The Prophet's office as promulgator and enforcement of law is relevant and refers. Based on revelation, the Prophet as leader and role model explains the requirements of the law at hand and practices it in view of his followers. This function is alluded to in the following verse: 'He does not speak on his own, out of his own desire; that (which he conveys to you) is but a Revelation that is revealed to him,'[149] clearly

[146] Accâc el-Hatîb, "Sünnetin Tesbiti".
[147] Qur'an 5:6.
[148] Muslim, *Taharah*, 86/277.
[149] Qur'an 53:3-4.

asserts the source of his tradition. Another verse refers to the same issue from a different perspective*:* 'We have never sent a Messenger but that he should be obeyed by God's leave.'[150]

According to Abu Hanifah's understanding, the prophetic tradition does not embody any opposition to the Qur'an nor does it give rules or detailed explanations contradicting the Qur'an, because the Qur'an and *sunnah* are two sources sustained by revelation. This discernment of Abu Hanifah, i.e. submitting the prophetic tradition to the Qur'an for approval, was the way of the companions. When making textual criticism of a new *hadith* they heard, they used to scrutinise its relation to the Qur'an. In his book titled *al-'Alim* wa *al-Muta'allim*, Abu Hanifah said on this subject:

> If someone says, "I believe everything the Prophet said. The Prophet would never command wrong, and never instruct anything that contradicts the Qur'an," these words would prove his affirmation of the Qur'an and the Prophet, and also mean that the Prophet would never go up against the Qur'an. Because, if the Prophet ever acts in opposition to the Qur'an, or says anything on behalf of God that He did not command, God would prevent him from doing so. The Prophet would not decree something which God prohibited, and he would not prohibit something which God permitted. He would not attribute any quality to anything other than what God attributed.[151]

Imam Abu Hanifah's view can be summarised by previously mentioned verse [152] Furthermore, the fact the Qur'an and prophetic tradition would not contradict each other is highlighted by this *hadith*:

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[150] Qur'an 4:64: It is also important to note that when the verse (Qur'an 6:82), 'those who have believed and not obscured their belief with any wrongdoing (of which, associating partners with God is the most grave, unforgivable kind)—they are the ones for whom there is true security, and they are rightly guided,' was revealed, the word *zulm* (wrong-doing) in the verse caused some concerns and hesitation among the companions. Because, in the Arabic language, this word is used in reference to 'wrong', 'transgression' and 'deviation from the truth and justice', and people did not know in which sense it was used in the verse. In a broad sense, this word would implicate almost everyone in the community. The matter needed to be resolved. They went to the Prophet and said, 'Who amongst us has not mixed his belief with wrong?' He replied: 'The verse does not mean this. But that (wrong) means to associate others in worship to God. Don't you listen to what Luqman said to his son when he was advising him, "O my son! Join not others in worship with God. Verily, joining others in worship with God is a great wrong indeed." (Qur'an 31:13; Bukhari, *Tafsir,* 31, 1). The explanation of the Prophet clarified that the word *zulm* in this verse was used in the sense of associating partners with God. This *hadith* is a good example of clarification of a Qur'anic verse by the Prophet and making sure that its purpose is understood properly.

[151] M. G. Dumayni, *Hadis'te Metin Tenkidi Metodları* (Istanbul: Kitabevi Publications, 1997).p, 247.

[152] Qur'an 4:80 'He who obeys the Messenger (thereby) obeys God'.

> You will encounter many *hadith*s after me. When a *hadith* is narrated to you from me, submit it to the Book of God. If it is in conformity with the Book, accept it, and know that it is from me. If it falls in contradiction with it, reject it, and know that it does not belong to me.[153]

With this tradition, the Prophet showed a method for textual criticism of *hadith* and, at the same time, he indicated the fact of interpretation of the Qur'an by the prophetic traditions.

The prescribed prayer is an important form of worship and the second pillar in Islam. The Qur'an points to the importance of prayer, 'Be ever mindful and protective of the prescribed Prayers, and the middle Prayer, and stand in the presence of God in utmost devotion and obedience,'[154] and makes specific emphasis about *al-salah al-wusta'* (the middle Prayer). The Prophet's wife 'A'ishah and Ibn Mas'ud from among the companions believed the middle prayer referred to the late afternoon prayer (*al-salah al-'Asr*), and they commented as such. 'A'ishah asked her servant to write a copy of the Qur'an for her personal use, and when they come to this verse she instructed to write it as the afternoon prayer, and said: 'This is what I heard from the Prophet of God.'[155] Despite the various interpretations of this verse, 'A'ishah and Ibn Mas'ud maintained their conviction that the middle prayer referred to the afternoon prayer.

Generally the *hadiths* would further elucidate verses of the holy Quran, through the Prophet's physical presence and practice, verbal or actual demonstration, guidance or approval. Prophetic traditions also expand and interpret concise Qur'anic verses by deduction and conclusion. Despite being the primary worship, none of the verses described it either quantitatively or qualitatively. Qur'anic exegetes (*Mufassirin*) deduced five times prayer a day from the verse below:

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[153] 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Bukhari, *Kashf al-Asrar*, III, 10.
[154] Qur'an 2:238.
[155] Tirmidhi, *Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 3.

> Establish the Prayer (O Messenger) at the beginning and the end of the day, and in the watches of the night near to the day. Surely good deeds wipe out evil deeds. This is advice and a reminder for the mindful who reflect.[156]

However, the specific timing of prayers was fixed through revelation: 'the Prayer is prescribed for the believers at fixed times.'[157] Gabriel guided the Prophet the specific towards times of the prescribed prayers. After this, the Prophet stood up for prayer in front of his companions and said: 'Pray as you see me praying.'[158] Furthermore, the Prophet taught—quantitatively and qualitatively—the details of the prescribed prayers, i.e. *fard* (obligatory), *wajib* (necessary), *sunnah* (the prophetic tradition), *mustahab* (recommended), *ruku'* (bowing) and *sujud* (prostration).[159]

Another case in point would be the Qur'anic verse with regard to inheritance. In Islam, heritage is a right and relatives are entitled to certain shares on the inheritance of the deceased. As indicated in the following verse, there are provisions for inheritance in the Qur'an:

> For the male heirs is a share out of what parents and near kindred leave behind, and for the female heirs is a share of what parents and near kindred leave behind, whether it (the inheritance) be little or much—a share ordained by God.[160]

As can be seen, the verse mentions entitlements to inheritance only in general terms. Although the inferred meaning in the verse still constitutes a basis for jurists' rulings, a *hadith*, reported from the Prophet in relation to this verse, brings another perspective. On the entitlement to inheritance for a murderer, the Prophet said: 'There is nothing for the murderer.'[161] The general ruling in the verse has been clarified by the tradition of the Prophet to state a murderer cannot inherit. In relation to provisions of this tradition, Hanafite jurists highlight this point: 'Killings punishable by *qisas* (*lex talionis*) or *kaffarah* (atonement) preclude the killer from inheritance.

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[156] Qur'an 11:114.
[157] Qur'an 4:103.
[158] Bukhari, *Adhan*, 18; Musnad, 5/53.
[159] Gülen, *Sonsuz Nur, (Infinity light) Sünnetin Tespiti Ve Teşrideki Yeri*.p, 28.
[160] Qur'an 4:7.
[161] Tirmidhi, *Fara'idh*, 17; Abu Da'wud, *Diyat*, 18.

Premeditated, intentional and accidental killings are of this nature.'[162] By the particularisation and commentary in the *hadith*, the Prophet highlighted the security and sanctity of life as the main factor in terms of relations between relatives. The Prophet also builds a family structure upon a solid and secure foundation by fostering the security of life and property among individual members of the family.

Qur'anic verses have been proclaimed and interpreted—as the circumstances arise—by the prophetic traditions. This means the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition complement each other. Looking into this from another point of view, by leaving the proclamation and detailed explanation of the Qur'anic verses to the Prophet, God presents His messenger as a practical role model.

Conclusion

The Qur'an and the prophetic tradition (*hadith* and *sunnah*) constitute two fundamental sources of Islam. The first source, the Qur'an, is the direct word of God, and the prophetic tradition, as the second source, represents the words, actions and tacit approvals of the Prophet. The term 'prophetic tradition' has been used throughout this study in reference to *hadith* and *sunnah* because these two terms are used interchangeably by traditionists. However, according to the general acceptance, the term *hadith* refers to verbal traditions and *sunnah* to the actions, guidance and approvals or more comprehensively, the lifestyle of the Prophet.

In the light of this, the prophetic tradition thus expands and explains the Qur'an. It also clarifies the practical and legal matters enjoined in the Qur'an. The Qur'an commands that, once a matter has been decided by God and the Prophet, that should be final and there is no other option for believers. As understood from all these, the prophetic tradition offers a complete lifestyle for Muslims.

[162] al-Sarakhsi, *al-Mabsut*, XXVI, 59; al-Kasani, *Bada'i' al-Sana'i'*, VII, 234, 254.

As the literacy of the companions improved, the system of living established in the time of the Prophet increased the desire among them toward study of the prophetic tradition. From that period onward, *hadith* have been recorded in writing or committed to memory—and narrated—by the *ahl al-suffah* and most of the companions. The sensitivity displayed by the companions and followers on the issue of recording and safeguarding of the traditions is a well-known fact among scholars. However, when confronted with uncertainty, the companions used to approach the Prophet for clarification. This means direct control and observation of the Prophet over the conservation of his tradition.

Although the Prophet initially prohibited recording of his traditions in writing, later on, he allowed his companions to write them down and encouraged them to do so. The main reason behind the prohibition was the risk of mixing up *hadith* with Qur'anic verses. Once this concern ceased to exist, the recording of traditions in writing was allowed.

Learning traditions directly from the Prophet, recording them in writing and committing them to memory continued ceaselessly until the death of the Prophet. After the Prophet's death, beginning from the end of the 1st century AH, serious works were undertaken in the field of *hadith*, and a robust system was established by the 3rd century AH. During that time, the process of codification of *hadith* continued and authenticated traditions were compiled into large books. Within the context of these scholarly works, the traditionists established certain selection criteria for *hadith* and founded the discipline of biographical evaluation, thus making sound and healthy transmission of traditions possible.

Despite all these criteria and sensitivity for safeguarding the authenticity of *hadith*, the last few centuries witnessed efforts and views spreading doubts on the prophetic traditions. A number of Western scholars, as well as some Muslim scholars

with modernist ideas, published works questioning the authenticity of *hadith* and criticising the position of the prophetic tradition as a reference source . They claimed that the Qur'anic verses are clear enough and do not need any explanation or interpretation by the prophetic tradition. As asserted in this study, the prophetic tradition is supported and approved by revelation; it has been carefully recorded and transmitted through reliable chains of narrators, whose reliability has been checked and confirmed by painstaking works and efforts of traditionists. In all aspects it is the true commentator of the Qur'an.

Chapter Two: Thoughts and assessments on *hadith* in contemporary time

Introduction

In this section, the focus will be on questions like 'What is *hadith*?', 'What is not *hadith*?' and 'What is *hadith*'s status as a religious fundamental in Islam?' according to Western scholars, rather than Muslims scholars, and their approaches will be critically analysed. Also certain points on the beginning of *hadith* studies in the Western world and its historical course will be discussed. What are the motives urging Western scholars to study Islamic sciences and particularly *hadith* disciplines: a genuine desire to learn or destructive criticism? This study will attempt to establish whether these efforts stem from a premeditated goal or the sheer love of acquiring knowledge. Answers to questions of this nature will be sought in this study.

Further, the various doubts expressed by Western scholars on the recordings and authenticity of *hadith* since the early period together with critical approaches to the compilations of *hadith* during the period that followed the death of the Prophet, and the emergence of *hadith* corpuses, will be assessed from different perspectives.

From the outset, it is important to make it clear that, while thoughts and theories can be discussed and criticised freely, their strength and validity can be analysed profoundly. What is paramount is ascertaining claims through objective rationale and traditional evidences. Only views free from prejudice can be commonly regarded as correct, and disparaging thoughts and views, which do not meet these criteria and which are motivated by destructive intentions, are doomed to oblivion.

Recent times have witnessed similar debates and controversies on the subject of *hadith* within the Islamic world, due to the influence of critical approaches exhibited in the West. Starting from this point, the present study will assess how Muslim understanding has been influenced by Western thought and consider both its positive and negative aspects.

Finally, contemporary Muslim scholars' approaches regarding the status of *hadith* as a fundamental source in Islam will be critically discussed .

Western and Muslim worlds from scholarly, religious and philosophical perspectives

In Islamic literature, the Qur'an, *hadith* and *sunnah* are considered the primary sources not only for Islamic sciences, but also for natural sciences. If religion is regarded as a whole, it is reasonable for it to point to natural sciences as well as metaphysical sciences. If the Qur'an focused only on the physical aspects of mankind and ignored their inner world, it would constitute a serious deficiency.[163] With its material and spiritual educational elements, the functionality of religion provides guidance to mankind in both realms. However, attempting to associate every religious value with physical sciences would not be appropriate, since not all religious standards may conform to the scientific data available in a given time. Essentially religion is based on 'belief in the unseen' (*ghayb*) as the Qur'an ordains: 'Those

[163] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kur'an'nın Altın İkliminde(In the Light of the Quran's Golden Climate)* (Istanbul: Nil Publication, 2010).p, 297.

[God-revering, pious] who believe in the Unseen…'[164] By submitting to this divine decree, human beings commit themselves to accept or believe in what they are unable to see through their physical eyes.

In terms of dealing with scientific progress, the Qur'an and *hadith* draw man's attention to the study of the natural sciences, while emphasising this as an integral part of faith. The following Qur'anic verse is a good example of urging man to introspection through investigating and exploring scientific data: '[O Prophet!] Read in and with the Name of your Lord, Who has created—Created human from a clot clinging (to the wall of the womb).'[165] Thus, in the Islamic world, a faith-based thought and research system has become a point of departure for all scientific and scholarly activities, opening new doors to acquire correct and healthy knowledge while simultaneously nurturing scientific and religious progress. It must also be said that, in every age, it is inevitable that the interactions between the followers of a religion and the members of other socio-religious systems will mutually affect each other with their new ideas and discoveries. Considered from this point of view, the mutual relations between the Islamic and non-Muslim worlds can be traced back to the early days of Islam. Beginning with interchanges in the fields of sciences, these relations spread over time into the area of thoughts and gained a different dimension when philosophy came into the equation. Philosophy-oriented interaction between the Western and Islamic worlds began in the 10th century and continued uninterrupted until the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment. Within the framework of cultural interactions, such as Islamic philosophy being influenced by ancient philosophy, Western philosophy was influenced by Islamic philosophy; this is an accepted historical fact. The impact of this influence manifested itself as the revival of

[164] Qur'an 2:3.
[165] Qur'an 96:1–2.

humanist movements in the West and the recognition of scientific methodology alongside ancient sciences.[166]

The questioning of religious values triggered by the influence of philosophy caused the beginning of great changes in the West. By distancing itself from religious values and trying to develop a humanist and secular thought system, the Western world unavoidably found itself face to face with a series of problems in the spheres of faith. Viewed from this point, the embracing character of the Qur'an and *hadith* vis-à-vis natural sciences did not escape the attention of non-Muslim philosophers and researchers. With this backdrop of culture, science and thought where mutual relations were vibrant, the non-Muslim thinkers felt the need to study the Qur'an and *sunnah*. However, the reformist thought that criticises some religious values in the West adopted an approach that was prejudiced and entrenched with deep suspicions toward the logic of faith and the scientific data in the Islamic world. The prevalence of a positivist approach, and the criticism of religious values from this viewpoint, resulted in Islamic sciences being criticised within the same framework. Thus, some Islamic sciences, including *hadith* disciplines, received more than their share of subjective criticisms. These thoughts and attitudes developing in the West, unsurprisingly found a place of reflection in the Islamic world over time, unavoidably due to the impact of age-old relations between the two worlds.

The most interesting situation during this period in the Islamic world was the emergence of secular and atheistic intellectuals, alongside the religious scholars and academics, taking their place in modern debates on the fundamental sources of the religion of Islam. Albayrak draws our attention to the sceptical attitude developed in the West towards the chains of transmissions (*isnad*), forming the basis for the

[166] Enver Demirpolat, "Islam Felsefesinin Batı Düşüncesine Etkisi " *Selcuk University, Journal of Institute of Social Science* 9(2003)., 431–432

rejection of *hadith*.[167] The most important concern here is the manipulation of the principle of referring to the Qur'an as the first primary source—a method that is characterised with the traditional Islam— and, under the pretence of 'revering the Qur'an', promoting the questioning of the legitimacy and health of authentic Islamic sources. Distanced from their own values, and trapped between tradition and modernism by the influence of aforementioned views originating from the West, a new breed of modernist Muslim intellectuals, who exerted themselves to reinterpret Islam, emerged.[168]

Developing in the West and over time spreading to the Islamic world, it has been a subject of wonder how this dialectic critical and reformist thinking emerged in the Western world. First of all, there is a need to focus on the perception of *hadith* within the framework of these thought movements concentrating on the Qur'an and *hadith*. How does the Western world see and weight *hadith*?

I must emphasize this important point here; the West familiarising with the Islamic culture, with the determination of Mgr. Armand Olichon, he has had the need to create a detailed understanding and research of Islamic sciences.

First, for the understanding of Islamic sources, Islamic scholars were educated to learn the Arabic language. The first scientific researches which was focusing on the Qur'an, later on since the 18th century it moved onto hadith based researches.[169]

Western literary works of *hadith* studies:

After the Renaissance and the birth of reform movements which encouraged open thought and freedom of speech in Europe, eastern religions and faiths increasingly came under investigation and scrutiny. The first independent works on *hadith* and *sunnah* in the West were pioneered by Alois Sprenger (d. 1893). These

[167] Albayrak, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Tefsir Anlayışı*.p, 26.
[168] In anticipation of another Martin Luther of the West, these people were unable conceive the emergence of another Abu Hanifah or Imam al-Ghazzali from within their own culture. (ibid., 13).
[169] Hatiboğlu, *Hadis Tedkikleri* p; 46-52

efforts continued in later periods by the intensive studies[170] of William Muir (d. 1905), C Snouck Hurgronce (d. 1936) and Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921).[171] Goldziher is one of the first Western scholars who started attacking and critiquing outright the institution of *hadith*, whilst describing *sunnah* as 'a tradition forged by the Prophet with his companions into the generations that followed them.' Conversely, these customs and traditions, in the presence of and sanctioned by the Prophet, had already been sanctified as habits practised by the early Muslims. As understood from this, Goldziher accepts *hadith* and *sunnah* as a collection of habits sanctified out of reverence to the Prophet within the community, rather than a religious principle and source.[172] He also says he sees *hadith* as verbal expression of the *sunnah*. This perception shows some resemblance to Muslim traditionists' observations about the relation between *hadith* and *sunnah*. Goldziher, with his definition of *hadith* to that effect, asserts that *hadith* are a source of reference in Islam employed to solve complex problems and issues. Contrary to negative Orientalist[173] perspectives, Goldziher comes out in support of the Islamic world-view on the origin of hadiths and evolution of its memorisation and recording and categorisation. On the issue of recording of *hadith* and *sunnah*, he highlights the possibility of safeguarding them with great respect since the time of the Prophet.[174] Judging by these views, it can be said that Goldziher is contradicting himself in a number of ways. Instead of placing *hadith* on sound foundations as a source of reference, he raises doubts by classifying *hadith* among customs and practices, which can be changed or cancelled at any time

170 For more detailed information on this see Zubayr, *Hadith Literature İts Origin, Development &Special Features*.
171 Hatiboğlu, *Hadis Tedkikleri* p, 51.
172 Mehmet Gormez, "Klasik Oryantalizmi Hadis Araştırmalarına Sevk Eden Temel Faktörler," *Islamiyat III* 1 (2000).
173 The concept of Orientalism, especially formed in the 18th and 19th centuries, is a term being used to refer to scientific studies of Western scholars about Islam.
173 Erkan Dikici, "Doğu-Batı Ayrımı Ekseninde Oryantalizm ve Emperyalizm (Journal of History Culture and Art Research)," *Tarih Kültür ve Sanat Araştırmaları Dergisi, Karabuk University* 3(June 2014).
174 Mehmet Gormez, "Klasik Oryantalizmi Hadis Araştırmalarına Sevk Eden Temel Faktörler," *Islamiyat III* 1 (2000).

in the course of history in a society. In this way, he is also obfuscating the Qur'an's clear reference to the *sunnah* in such a manner that can open ways leading to doubts and hesitations. At the same time, he also fashions a situation in which the abolition of other significant functions of *hadith* and *sunnah*, such as the interpretation of the Qur'an, can occur. In my opinion, Goldziher is attempting to sever the organic tie between the Qur'an and *hadith*, and weaken the *hadith*'s most important role, which was established in Islamic literature.

Goldziher devoted the majority of the second volume of his work, titled *Muhammedanishe Studien*, to his views about *hadith*. After the publication of this work, patchy studies on *hadith* in the West became an independent subject of research. This work constituted a source of reference for many non-Muslim scholars that followed him.[175]

Goldziher accepts *hadith* as a norm for practical application for a particular period of time, as well as an authoritative medium in the interpretation of the Qur'an, he also argues that, during later periods, *hadith* lost its authenticity. When providing a definition, he explains that *hadith* attributed to the Prophet and his companions 'are not authentic reports of these persons but rather reflect the doctrinal and political developments of the first two centuries of Islam'.[176] According to this, *hadith* do not have a direct relation to the Prophet. In his opinion, *hadith* are important media to access information related to the Prophet and his time. For Goldziher, the majority of *hadith* reported from the Prophet, which took their honourable place in *al-Kutub al-Sittah*, are lies and fabrications. If *hadith* are considered as fabricated during the two centuries that followed the death of the Prophet, an important point, which Goldziher disregards or even deems non-existent, draws our attention – the established criteria of

[175] Fatma Kızıl, "Oryantalistlerin Hadis Literatürü Hakkındaki Görüşleri.," (2009), http://sonpeygamber.info/oryantalistlerin-hadis-literaturu-hakkindaki-gorusleri
[176] Falahi, "Development of Hadith Aconcise Introduction of Early Hadith Literature". 2.

reporting and the discipline of *rijal* (biographical evaluation of narrators), a subject treated by the companions, the generation that followed them and the scholars of *hadith* with utmost care respect. He not only tends to ignore the criteria scholars of *hadith* mentioned in *'ilm al-rijal*, and even treats the most strong *hadith* (*mutawatir*) as fabricated.[177]

Given his views and style, Goldziher's still a pioneer in reviewing and investigating the Islamic primary sources, his method of studying *hadith* and sources of reference must be taken into consideration to determine his starting point. When he asserts his opinions about *hadith* and *sunnah*, and provides his supporting evidence, he draws heavily on specific and unorthodox sources such as *Mu'tazilah* and *Shi'ah*.[178]

From a literary perspective, Leone Caetani, an Italian scholar and historian of the Middle-East, also known for his work on the history of Islam produces views about *hadith* and *sunnah* similar to Goldziher's. His thoughts echo Goldziher's 'sanctified habits and customs' whilst for him, *hadith* and *sunnah* represent no more than a simple perception of memories of the Prophet preserved by the companions, which fell into oblivion after his death. Drawing attention to his statement about the Prophet's 'Farewell Sermon' is also fitting. In his view, '…this might have stemmed from a desire to perform the hajj devotion—only with Muslims—in front of a community of thousands of Muslims, all of them recently converted and submitted themselves to his now absolute power and authority'.[179] Treating the Farewell Sermon—a speech covering topics like women's place, importance of Islam and

[177] Seyfullah Kara, "Hz.Peygamber'e Karşı Oryantalist Bakış ve bu Bakışın Kırılmasında Metodolojik Yaklaşımın Önemi," *Atatürk University, Journal of Theology Faculty* 23(2005).p, 26.
[178] Bekir Ezer, "Alman Oryantalistlerin Hz. Muhammed Sünnet ve Hadis Hakkındaki Çalışmaları (1900–1950)" (Master, Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2007). 42.
[179] M. Asım Köksal, *Müsteşrik Caetani'nin Yazdığı İslam Tarihindeki İsnad Ve İftiralara Reddiye* (Ankara: Published by Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 1986).p, 30.

usury, and a charter for social justice based on important legal principles[180]—as nothing but a simple memory is, in simplest terms, an injustice to academia. Completely overlooking the established transmission of narration (*riwayat aqli* and *naqli*), non-Muslim scholars seem to ignore the intense documentation recording the chains of narrators. The companions, their followers and the generation of Muslims that followed them did not consider *hadith* and *sunnah* as a collection of memories; on the contrary, they acknowledged and preserved them as a fundamental source of the religion, second after the Qur'an, and as detailed explanations of the religion provided personally by the Prophet.

Joseph Schacht (d. 1969) was a leading Western scholar on Islamic law. Looking into his research reveals a theory or model that assumes *hadith* and *sunnah* do not constitute a basis in Islamic literature and therefore have no association with the Prophet. *Hadith*, in his view, are a phenomenon invented and attributed to the Prophet by scholars to support their arguments from the second and third centuries AH. In presenting his views he follows a chronological order, and says:

> If we must say in general terms, first emerged the living traditions of old schools of law, to a great extent based on individual cases, then at the second phase, these have been advanced, and attributed to the companions [as *hadith*].

He continues with his argument and arrives to this point:

> We learn that the majority of the *hadith*s attributed to the Prophet have emerged at the time of the generation that followed him, that is during the second quarter of the second century. However, we do not come across any legal *sunnah* transmitted from the Prophet that can be considered authentic.[181]

Looking from Schacht's viewpoint, *hadith* and *sunnah* are lies fabricated in the name of the Prophet rather than being his genuine deeds and words. Schacht also claims that historical data has been constructed upon lies and fabrications. He draws attention to a

[180] The Farewell Sermon was delivered to an audience numbering 110,000 and its details were confirmed by a large number of companions who attended the speech.
[181] Ezer, "Alman Oryantalistlerin Hz. Muhammed Sünnet Ve Hadis Hakkındaki Çalışmaları (1900–1950)." p,48.

situation in which lies were attributed to all scholars and jurists among the lineage of people, starting from the companions through to the generations that followed them, and their valuable works were considered null and void. There is also a case of false accusation on the Prophet, who permitted—and encouraged—the writing down of *hadith* and *sunnah*. Schacht's approach mostly resembles Goldziher's views on *hadith* and this gives the impression they share the same basic viewpoint. Schacht's views also attempt to ascertain that *hadith* and *sunnah* are just a collection of habits and customs. He mentions the claim by Ibn al-Muqaffa' that the term *sunnah* was forged within the Umayyad state administrative system during the 2nd century AH.[182]

Another leading name on the research of Islam in the West is Hurgronje. Hurgronje regards the majority of *hadith* as an expression of views and ideas during the first three centuries AH.[183] Beside this, Hurgronje makes reference to Goldziher, and stresses that *hadith* cannot be used for exegesis of the Qur'an. He reckons, when rumours and narratives are eliminated, what is left as the oldest news can only provide some information about the first century AH, and establishing a tangible connection between this data and the Prophet is not possible.[184]

Looking into *hadith* from the viewpoint of Western scholars, such as Alois Sprenger, Snouck Hurgronje, Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht, who published books and articles on *hadith*, biographies and other Islamic sciences, certainly some doubts arise.

Alongside those who criticise *hadith,* and fall just short of declaring them non-existent, other Western scholars have chosen to mitigate the atmosphere. Some of them admit that reproachful criticisms of *hadith* are exaggerated and unjust. For example, J. Fück, one of the leading Western scholars of the last century on Islam,

[182] A'zamî, *İslâm Fıkhı,* 144; Schacht, *Origins*, 58–59.
[183] Kızıl, "Oryantalistlerin Hadis Literatürü Hakkındaki Görüşleri.".p, 54.
[184] ibid.

says 'the logic of considering every legal *sunnah* fake until proven otherwise is feeding a scepticism based on an ego without boundaries'.[185] As can be seen from this kind of assessment in the West, a relative softening of rigidity on approaches toward Islam in general, and *hadith* in particular, becomes evident.

For example, James Robson states his views on *hadith* and *sunnah* in *Islam Ansiklopedisi* [Encyclopaedia of Islam]: 'The idea of establishing *sunnah* as the second source of law after the Qur'an has taken shape at the end of certain process. Arising problems among the Muslims necessitated a secondary source, and this process initiated'.[186]

In explaining his views on the Prophet's receiving of revelation, Maxime Rodinson asserts that he was not suffering from an illness, such as an epileptic fit.[187] He explains his views on the Prophet as follows:

> The Christian theologians who looked upon Muhammad as a liar as well as the18th Century (rationalist) philosophers are now left behind. The advancement in the sciences of psychology and psychiatry subdued these stumpy statements. The concept of subconsciousness has made us easily understand this kind of events.[188] However, his view on the hadith is the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad were not written in the life of the Prophet Muhammad and if written, they were not cultivated by the Prophet during his life personally.'[189]

It is important to understand rational approaches to *hadith* in recent times alongside the early period's critical approach to the relationship between *hadith* and the Qur'an.

Motives urging the West to study Islamic sciences and *hadith*

A proper understand of the motives urging and encouraging studies and research on *hadith* and other Islamic sciences in the West requires analysis and

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[185] J. Fück, *The Role of Traditional in Islam, Studies in Islam* (New York1981).p, 99–122.
[186] Mustafa Dönmez, "Oryantalist James Robson'un Sünnet ve Hadis Konusundaki Görüşlerinin Tenkidi," (Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi: Temel İslam Bilimler Bölümü, Hadis Ana Bilim Dalı, 1999).
[187] Kara, "Hz.Peygamber'e Karşı Oryantalist Bakış Ve Bu Bakışın Kırılmasında Metodolojik Yaklaşımın Önemi." p,153–156.
[188] M. Rodinson, *Hz.Muhammed, Yeni Bir Dünyanın, Dinin Ve Silahlı Bir Peygamberin Doğuşu*, trans. Attila Tokatlı (İstanbul: Göçebe Publication, 1968).p, 87–88
[189] Muhammad Akram Sajid and Muhammad Abdullah, ""Muhammad" by Maxime Rodinson (an Analytical Study)," *Jihāt al-Islām, Lahore-Pakistan* 4, no. 1-2 (July-December 2010/January-June2011).

interpretation of the available historical data in a rigorous manner. Keeping in mind that only correct data can lead to the truth and realistic interpretations, research carried out and theories construed that do not reflect the truth can, besides damaging historical facts, also cause science to lose its trustworthiness and blemish academia's reputation.

It is possible to make a list of the motives urging Western scholars to study this field. Showing one single reason or pointing to one single possibility is not realistic. Reasons varied during the course of the historical research process. What is essential is the presence of historical records and documents supporting the arguments. This is the reason why it is necessary to assess the subject matter with its different aspects since the early periods. Historical relations between Muslim and non-Muslim states date back to the time of the Prophet. These relations were developed in cultural, religious, scientific and other areas with the passages of time.

For example, the presence of Andalusian Muslims in this multicultural geography for centuries paved the way for a rich variety of religious and cultural dialogues and interpretations. When Ibn Jubayr (d.1217), a Muslim traveller, visited Sicily in 1185, he noted that King William II (d.1189) could read and write in Arabic, and the Christians of Palermo spoke Arabic and dressed like Muslims. Norman kings in Sicily used Arabic writing and the Islamic (*Hijri*) calendar. According to Philip Hitti, (d. 1978) during the caliphate of Abdurrahman II (d. 852 CE) in Andalusia, the majority of the Christian population living in cities had a lifestyle similar to Muslims' due to the influence of language, literature and social institutions.[190]

It is a well-known fact that the first serious works on Islam in the West began by translating the meaning of the Qur'an into Latin in 1143 CE. That is, the 12th century is when the influence of Islam on the West was truly felt, as explained in this

[190] Philip K. Hitti, *İslâm Tarihi, Iii*, trans. Salih Tuğ (Istanbul: Kitap Yurdu Publication, 2011).p, 811.

chapter. This is, in a way, also known as the early stage of the first period of Western encounter of Islam. The advancement of Muslims in scientific works in this period attracted the attention of the Western world. This may have encouraged Western scholars to study Islamic sciences as a challenge. However, apprehensions raised in the West caused concern for the Eastern Christians and the protection of their faith became an objective. Thus, missionary works started for this purpose became evident. Here, it is paramount to emphasise this point: the basis of missionary works was to protect the faith of the Christian population, not to convert Muslims from their religion.[191]

During this period, Western scholars did not possess sufficient knowledge on Islamic sciences, and there was a serious need for studies to be carried out in this field. Therefore, they considered debates with Muslim scholars to be very risky. This may also be seen as a reason for the prohibition enforced on the publication of the Qur'an during the Cromwell era in England.[192] During the course of matters that followed, working groups—composed of clergymen and using resources provided by them—were implemented to carry out research on Islamic sciences and *hadith*, thus works began. The real intention of this research was to collect the material they would need to criticise Islam, not to increase their knowledge or enrich their culture by learning about this religion. Core issues such as the life of Muhammad and the rise of Islam were used to serve this purpose.[193] As pointed out earlier, research on the life of the Prophet, focusing on the correlation between him and the Qur'an, was a work-in-progress during the centuries that followed. What can be construed from this information, the real purpose of all these efforts, were the safeguarding of the Christian faith and the strengthening of ties between Eastern and Western

[191] R. Irwin, *Oryantalistler Ve Düşmanları, (for Loust of Knowing the Orientalist and Their Enemies)*, trans. Bahar Tırnakcı (Istanbul: Published by Yapı Kredi Publications, 2008).p, 91.
[192] Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, January 7, 2008).p, 76.
[193] Irwin, *Oryantalistler Ve Düşmanları, (for Loust of Knowing the Orientalist and Their Enemies)*., 90.

Christianity. For this reason, the proper understanding of the Qur'an and *sunnah* was crucial for them.

In other words, preserving the unity within Christianity, while trying to develop a type of defence mechanism against Islam, may be shown as one of the reasons for this research. A close scrutiny of these works clearly reveals that a critical approach was adopted for the purpose of the research on Islam and *hadith*.

In the meantime, as a result of questioning the religion with the influence of philosophy and rationalist thought currents, Christianity suffered a serious decline in the West. Without doubt, Islam had been influenced by these thought currents and subjected to questioning. This rationale, which questions and criticises any religious principle it comes across, also led the way to start works to criticise and disparage Islamic values. This structure of thought especially focused on the Qur'anic truth and reliability of *hadith*. Therefore, it may be possible to say that another reason for research on the Qur'an and *hadith* is this philosophical trend.

This is what Cerrahoğlu writes in this connection:

> In the West, works on Islam and its sources were carried out—in the past to some extent, and in our times exclusively—by Orientalist circles and similarly minded scholars. These works have been authored with a hostile intention rather than the noble cause of serving Islam. Therefore, they have to be carefully studied before being referred to as a source although they contain some scientific elements.[194]

Bringing Cerrahoglu's assertion of 'hostile intention' together with Irwin's views reveals very important data on the starting point and motives of these works.

Bernard Lewis points out the psychological background of the works, and says:

> Some Western scholars, motivated by their own nationalist agendas, are labelling Muslims with qualities such as backwardness, weakness and ignorance. With this approach, they are aiming particularly at Muslim readers to drive them into a psychology of losing their self-confidence.[195]

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[194] Ismail Cerrahoğlu, "Oryantalizm Ve Batıda Kur'an Ve Kur'an İlimleri Üzerine Araştırmalar " *Ankara University, Journal of Faculty of Theology,* XXXI(1989).p,115.

[195] Bernard Lewis, *İslâmın Siyasal Söylemi*, trans. Fatih Taşar (Istanbul: Phoenix Publication, 1992).p, 20.

Considering these assessments made by Lewis together with discussions that took place in the first part, the West's reactionary and competitive approach to Islamic culture exposes itself very clearly. Hence, sowing the seeds of suspicion in the minds among the Muslim populace and creating an upheaval in their thought system is in question. In a community whose thought system was turned upside-down with minds preoccupied with doubts and hesitations, achieving healthy results with such a scientific and scholarly methodology would be questionable.

Looking down on others with disdain can be considered a leading motive behind Western scholars' adoption of negative approaches, such as criticism, competitiveness and antagonism. The large number of responses given by Muslim scholars to those criticisms and suspicions provide some idea about the quantity of works on Islamic sciences carried out in the West. This again supports Lewis' views. However, extending this assertion over the whole of the Western world would be an injustice to those objective and valuable works also carried out in the same part of the world.

In recent times, a relatively moderate policy of distancing from prejudicial and disparagingly critical approaches on scientific works in order to carry relations to a more favourable ground is noticeable. The scepticism that developed—through Western thoughts and perspectives–impacted on Muslims toward information originating from the West and gradually became widespread among the Muslim scholars. This situation in the scientific area is also becoming apparent in political as well as commercial areas. The policy of moderation in relations is an effort to overcome this distrust between the two great civilisations.

Western views on the recording of *hadith*

An important matter from the viewpoint of historical discourse and soundness of *hadith*, in the West, is the prohibition enforced on the writing of *hadith* and

permission being granted again at a later stage. Muslim and Western scholars have differing views on the recording of *hadith* by writing or committing to memory. Primarily, it is useful to know the companions' approach to *hadith* according to Muslim sources. Works written on the subject clearly show the companions of the Prophet were extremely sensitive about his words. The companions' regard for *hadith* stemmed from the respect they had for the Prophet as well as reverence to the Qur'an. Warnings in Qur'anic verses caused the companions to focus on the Prophet and his *sunnah*. A verse decrees: 'and whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah'.[196] The companions' efforts to protect and preserve *hadith* came to the fore because of this verse.

After the migration (*Hijrah*) to Medina, *ashab al-suffah*'s scholarly works can be seen as a good example in regard to the writing down and memorisation of *hadith*. The appointment of Abd Allah b. Sa'id b. al-'As by the Prophet to teach them how to read and write is a well-known historical fact.[197] The method of memorisation in the Arabian Peninsula was based on the power of memory and strong Arab literature.[198] Companions who knew how to read and write were writing the *hadith* on materials available at that moment, such as leather, wood and date-leaves. Recordings and memorisation of *hadith* were carried out under the Prophet's supervision.

After a while, however, the scriptural recording of *hadith* was prohibited by the Prophet. In compliance with these narrations, the companions stopped writing down *hadith*, and those who tried to write were prevented by reminders of these reports. Zayd b. Thabit' preventing Mu'awiyyah from writing down *hadith* is a good example of this. However, the Prophet permitted his traditions to be memorised and

[196] Qur'an 59:7.
[197] Ibn al-Athir, *Usd al-Ghabah*, III.175.
[198] Kocyiğit, *Hadis Tarihi*.p, 20.

transmitted verbally.[199] To clarify the point, a blanket prohibition of the transmission of *hadith* had never been the case.

Some commentaries were made on these *hadith* and the prohibition imposed by the Prophet. First, looking at Western scholars' comments reveals an interesting picture. Goldziher views a correlation between the prohibition of writing down of *hadith* and taking another verbal source apart from the Torah as a base in Judaism. He argues that a legislative development of Judaism had a warning effect on the rejection of *hadith*—which, according to Muslims, have a divine origin—and the prohibition of their recording by writing.[200] According to him, the objection against the writing down of *hadith* was mainly the concern of Islam being treated in the same way as Judaism. He holds this was the reason the Prophet stopped companions writing down *hadith*. In this connection, Goldziher gives this example: Abd Allah ibn al-A'la requested from Qasim, who is a grandson of Abu Bakr, to have *hadith* written down for him. Qasim replied: 'The numbers of written *hadith* were increased during the time of 'Umar b. al-Khattab. 'Umar asked people bring them to him; when he had all of them in his hands, he ordered to burn them, and said this: 'Do you want a duality like the duality of Judaism?' In Goldziher's view, the duality here refers to the *Mishnah* (Oral Torah) in Judaism.[201]

Goldziher mentions the prohibition of writing down *hadith*, but he interprets this ban on the grounds of different reasons. In his later views, he holds as fabricated the part of the *hadith* mentioned above, 'whoever deliberately attributes a lie to me, he should prepare his seat in the fire.' In regard to this matter, he argues this *hadith* is not a sound narration and fabricated to prevent people from forging false *hadith*. One important point here is that Goldziher contradicts himself by accepting the prohibition

[199] Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*,758.
[200] Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, trans. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971).
[201] Ceyhan, "Alman Müsteşrik Ignaz Goldziher'in İslam Hukukunun Kaynaklari Hakkindaki Görüşleri ve bu Görüşlerin Değerlendirilmesi (P. 28-31)"p. 29.

of writing down *hadith* on the grounds of the first part of the abovementioned *hadith*—and commenting on the subject—and immediately rejects the other part of the *hadith*—which is in contextual accord with the first part—as fabricated.

It is noted that some Western scholars of recent times argue that the Prophet copied the Qur'an from texts of the Old and New Testaments. Goldziher, when he was arguing the prohibition of writing down *hadith* due to concerns of Islam being treated the same as Judaism, may be alluding to this: the companions, through the experience of writing down *hadith*s, may come to learn the structure of *Mishnah*, consequently may arrive to the truth of the Prophet having drawn on heavily on the Torah. The Prophet prohibited the recording of *hadith*s to prevent this truth from coming out.

These kinds of theories may be construed on the basis of Goldziher's clearly contradictory views. Explaining it in any other way, the acceptance of one part of a *hadith* and rejection of another part, would pose some difficulty. On the other hand, looking from another angle, it is no less than attributing lies to the Prophet.

While Goldziher looks into the prohibition of writing down *hadith* and the truth in a moderate manner, it can also be said that he did not opine adversely on the recording of *hadith* in writing. He uses, as a basis to his views, the narration by Abu Hurayrah, 'There is not anyone, except Abd Allah b. 'Amr b. al-'As, among the companions of the Prophet who reported more *hadith*s than me. He used to write them down but I didn't write'.[202] According to Goldziher, this style of *hadith* can be accepted as evidence of the recording of *hadith* by writing during the time of the Prophet.[203] In light of these views, he, like Sprenger, may be deemed as coming closer to Muslim scholars' views on the recording of *hadith*. However, the meaning

[202] Bukhari, *al-Jami'u's-sahih*, "*Ilm*", 39.
[203] Nimetullah Akın, "Hadislerin Yazılı Kaydı Ve Literatür Esaslı Bir Disiplin Olma Süreci: A. Sprenger, I. Goldziher Ve G. Schoeler'in Yaklaşımları," *Published by Journal of Hadis Tetkikleri* VI/1(2008).p,54.

Goldziher inferred from *kitabat* (recording, writing in book form) and the meaning Muslim scholars attributed to the term are rather different. He regards these written documents as collections of individual accounts the Muslims heard at different times and recorded for their own use. These recorded notes were obtained without *qira'at* (reciting) or *sama'* (reporting of *hadith* by way of direct acquisition from an acceptable authority) of the person involved or their textual contents being considered as if they were received through a proper channel of transmission. Using Abd Allah b. Lahia's (d. 790 CE) books as examples to these written notes, Goldziher points to Abd Allah's loss of his reliability and never gaining back his prestige after the destruction of his notes as a result of a fire.[204] While it is a well-known fact that Muslim scholars base their views, regarding *hadith* reported from the companions, on chains of narrators confirming each other, Abd Allah's loss of his notes would not mean much had been lost, if another companion knew and maintained the same *hadith*. Yet, there are also verbal narrations alongside written narrations. Reports from the companions, if their authenticity is verified, are accepted as verbal or written narrations. However, in Goldziher's understanding of recording, an isolated and baseless consideration strikes one's attention. That is, he was convinced the companions had individual written records that did not support each other.

Goldziher's assertions on the prohibition of writing down *hadith* have been explained by Muslim scholars in a rather different manner. The Prophet did not allow the recording of *hadith* in writing because he wanted nothing but the Word of God, the Qur'an, to be revered and espoused by the Muslims with all its characteristics. He did not view the scholarly procedures of scribing the verses of the Qur'an to be applied to *hadith* as fitting. Besides, the prohibition of writing down *hadith* in the Medina period brings to mind the period in Mecca. During the Meccan period, verses

[204] ibid., 55.

revealed were related to the belief of Oneness of God (*tawhid*). The false beliefs related to God were exposed by these revelations; thus, there was not too much to be explained by the Prophet. The principles of the Islamic system were established in later years and the need for the Prophet's explanatory teachings were arose mostly in Medina. Therefore, recording *hadith* in writing in early periods was not closely related to the normal historical development of Islam.[205] Also, the huge difference in the numbers of Muslims who could read and write during the Mecca and Medina periods must be emphasised. Historical records show there were only 24 companions who could read and write during the Meccan period, while these numbers in the Medina period show a significant increase as a result of the Prophet's encouragement and support.

For the majority of Arabs, not being well-versed in Islamic traditions and being unable to differentiate between Qur'anic verses and other words, the prohibition of recording *hadith* in writing became relevant.[206] Other views by Muslims scholars and traditionists on the prohibition imposed on the writing down of *hadith*s included: there were only a few people who could read and write so a written culture was inadequate during the early period;[207] the ban was for those with a powerful memory, but who feared they could only trust written records; on the other hand, the permission for writing was for those who feared they would forget if they did not write things down;[208] writing was banned for the general public, but permission was given for the well-literate;[209] and the prohibition was specific to the period of Qur'anic revelation to

[205] Ismail Lütfi Çakan, *Hadis Edebiyâtı* (Istanbul: Marmara University, The Foundation of Faculty of Theology, 1997).p, 4.
[206] Al-Khatib, *Taqyid al-'Ilm*, 57.
[207] Ismail Cerrahoğlu, "Tefsir Ve Hadis Kitâbetine Karşı Peygamber Ve Sahabenin Durumu " *Ankara University, The Journal of Faculty of Theology* 9(1962).p, 43.
[208] C. A. B. Suyûtî, *Tadrîbu'r-Râvî fî Sharhi Takrîbi'n Navavî.* (Cairo: Published by Dâru'l-Hadîs, 2004).p, 354.
[209] M. A. M. Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'vîlu Muhtalafi'l-Hadith* (Beirut: Published by Dâru'l-Kutubi'l- Ilmiyya, n.d).p, 266.

prevent Qur'anic verses and *hadith* being written on the same pages, but they could written on separate pages.[210]

As can be understood from these explanations, the aim of the Prophet's banning of the recording *hadith* in writing is related to protection of the Qur'an and the fundamentals of the religion. Looking for any other consideration is secondary. Sprenger does not ignore the ban of writing down *hadith* being imposed by the Prophet. According to him, this ban was reported by many companions. He expresses his opinion this way:

> The author of the book most read, Qur'an, had a prejudice—a prejudice, which was shared by the majority of the companions—against keeping a written record of *hadith*s. Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Hurayrah and others hold that there was no permission given for writing.[211]

It is important to highlight this point: the Prophet's unfavourable stance was not against the usage of writing, but was against the process of writing and compiling *hadith* into booklets.[212] In this connection, Sprenger opines:

> …We have to make a difference between notes kept to help the memory, and corpora and books. Muslims began keeping notes to help their memory since the early period, and, those with more moderate thought are in the opinion that note-taking in writing was allowed.[213]

However, Sprenger's opinions on the banning of recording *hadith* during early periods may be viewed as showing some similarities with Islamic literature. He accepts that, from the material point of view, there was no cause preventing the writing down of *hadith* in early periods, and the practical applications proved this. Nevertheless, Sprenger's favourable approach to the written records of *hadith* does not mean he also holds a similar view on the health and soundness of *hadith*.[214]

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[210] Suyûtî, *Tadrîbu'r-Râvî fî Sharhi Takrîbi'n Navavî*., 354.
[211] Akın, "Hadislerin Yazılı Kaydı Ve Literatür Esaslı Bir Disiplin Olma Süreci: A. Sprenger, I. Goldziher Ve G. Schoeler'in Yaklaşımları."
[212] ibid. 4.
[213] ibid.
[214] ibid.

Looking into Sprenger's and Goldziher's views concerning the banning of recording *hadith* in writing, it is possible to say they were endeavouring to cast doubts upon the reliability of these sources. On the one hand, there is Goldziher's acceptance of small booklets, like Sprenger's, but on the other hand, there is his emphasis upon the Prophet's negative attitude to the compilation of *hadith* into book form.. Looking from their perspective, it is possible to construe questions such as: Although the Prophet did not want *hadith* being compiled into a book form since the early period, why have *hadith* collections been published by traditionists since the 2nd century AH? This could be considered a practice which violates the prophetic s*unnah*. Through these kinds of comments, assertions and questions, doors can be opened to doubts and criticisms on *hadith* and collections of *hadith*.

Effects of modernism on Muslim scholars' perception of *hadith*

There is a modernist and reformist current of thought in the Muslim world, influenced by both Western critical thinking and Muslim revivalist movements, which demonstrates different approaches to *hadith* and argues for new approaches to the tradition within the Islamic world. This current, which began emerging at the beginning of the 19th century CE, continues to shows its influence in different aspects and viewpoints. Ahmad Din (d. 1936), Ahmad Parwiz (d. 1953), Ahmad Amin (d. 1954), Hafiz Muhammad Aslam Jairajpuri (d. 1955), Abu Rayyah (d. 1970), Ghulam Ahmad Parwez (d. 1985), Mahmud M. Taha (d. 1985), Fazlur Rahman (d.1988), Muhammad Ghazali (d. 1996) and are some of the scholars within this current of thought. These representatives of modernist thought in the Muslim world have focused their works mostly on *hadith* and its associated sciences. . It can be said that the emergence of confusion and new criticisms on *hadith* among Muslims are the product of thoughts of this kind. Topics like their perceptions of *hadith* and their

stance on the status of *hadith* are important, and should be carefully discussed and analysed.

With his assertion of *hadith* being fabricated after the time of the Prophet, Fazlur Rahman declares openly that he disregards all traditional principles and bases in the discipline of *hadith.* Or put differently, giving him the benefit of the doubt, one could say that he approaches these sciences with deep suspicion. If the question was one of doubt concerning the authenticity of *hadith*, the basis and sources of such hesitation should be made available in scholarly works. His views show some similarities to Goldziher's assertion of *hadith* being forged from the 2nd century AH, in accordance with the political views of the time.

Fazlur Rahman, when giving his views on the disciplines of Islamic law (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalam*), says that the thoughts and views of scholars have been attributed to the Prophet from the 2nd century AH. In this connection, he says:

> The *hadith* movement reached an advanced point by the middle of the 2nd Century AH. Although most of the *hadith*s were still attributed to people—to companions and especially to the generations that followed them—other than the Prophet, some of the legal and theological views of Muslims of the early period were started to be attributed to the Prophet.[215]

Here, in a way, there is an ascription of lie and distrust to the companions. Also, with these statements and through the body of *hadith*, questions are being raised about the principal disciplines, such as Islamic law and theology. In his view, if the ideas of early Muslims can be linked to the Prophet, it can only be through the medium of *hadith*. That is, the discipline of *hadith* suffers from a serious problem of reliability, as *hadith* can be the ideas of ordinary people attributed to the Prophet or fabricated in the 2nd century AH. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a prudent approach toward the disciplines of Islamic law and theology, which are trying to establish their origin with the Prophet.

[215] Fazlurrahman, *Tarih Boyunca Islâmi Metodoloji Sorunu (Islamic Methodology in History)*.p, 37.

Nevertheless, while some modernist scholars followed the paths of Jamal al-Din Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida and Fazlur Rahman, others assert they were wrong. Yet, some talk about the 'historicalness' of the Qur'an and *sunnah*, while others even go to the extent of claiming the Prophet authored the Qur'an. Some research and scholars also reject the status of *ijma'* and *qiyas* as sources of *shari'ah*. One group talks about the illegality of the judicial schools of thought (*madhhab*), another one talks about mixing *madhahib* (*talfiq*), and yet another one argues that every individual should be allowed to arbitrarily deduce legal rulings directly from the Qur'an.[216]

Some writers and scholars, such as Turan Dursun, Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, Zekeriya Beyaz, Edip Yuksel and Hüseyin Atay, are known to be followers of modernist understanding and secular approach.

In his polemical books, Turan Dursun, who holds a secular stance, concentrates on the probability of the Qur'an being the words of the Prophet. Also known is Dursun's sceptical approach to the early periods of Islam and the efforts of the companions in the field of *hadith*.

Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, another modernist scholar, asserts his view on *hadith* as follows:

> All *hadith*s, except thirty or fifty of them, are forged. Accepting any source other than Qur'an is polytheism (*shirk*). Because no source other than Qur'an has the guaranty of [Divine] protection. The *hadith* pertaining to [the event of] *Mi'raj* (the Prophet's ascension to heavens) is full of contradictions. Narrations attributed to the Prophet, which command the writing [down of *hadith*s] are fabricated. What were written as *hadith* was attributed to the Prophet as if they were his words. Hadiths are not bounding from the legal point of view; they cannot be a source of reference in court rulings, because they are full of contradictions.[217]

[216] Osman Akyildiz, "Dinde Reformcu Yaklaşımlar Veya Dinî Modernizmin Yükselişi," *Journal of Akademya* 1 September, December(2010).p, 94–108.
[217] Dönmez, Mustafa. "Islam dünyasinda hadis inkarcıları ve görüşleri" (1999-2000), http://www.islah.de/sunnet/sun00008.pdf

From his words, it can be understood that *hadith* cannot be used to interpret the Qur'an. According to him, *hadith* cannot constitute a source for legal rulings; there are serious doubts about their preservation. Thus, *hadith* with an unreliable origin and doubtful authenticity cannot possibly be a source of reference in Islam. With these views, he comes closer to the current of thought that does not accept any source other than the Qur'an. In this thought, what is essential is the Qur'an and there is no need for *sunnah* for its understanding.

Ozturk continues his statements on *hadith*, and says:

> Imitators ['*muqallid*'] who are intermediaries of polytheism ('*Şürakâcı*') have formulated a religion outside the Qur'an by making these people [companions] as well the history lie, and two centuries after his death, attributing to the Prophet the pile of *mishnah* amounting to ten times of the size of the Qur'an.[218]

His assertion of *hadith* being forged in the times after the Prophet shows some similarities with views held by Sprenger, Goldziher, Schacht and Hurgronje. This argument also shows a striking resemblance to Goldziher's view of the *Mishnah-hadith* correlation.

In explaining his view on the Prophet's legislative authority beside the Qur'an, he states that he views this as a form of polytheism. Answering a question on the power of the Prophet in laying down legislation, he says:

> The Prophet has no authority to lay down law except [what is mentioned] in the Qur'an; if you say, "yes, he has," this would constitute polytheism. The Prophet is the slave and the prophet of God. A prophet is the messenger [one who delivers the message] of the Power he represents, but not his partner.[219]

It must be noted that mainsream Muslim scholars have no doubt the Prophet had the authority to lay down the law and the *sunnah* has the quality to interpret the Qur'an. This is supported by Qur'anic verses:

> (We sent them with) clear proofs of the truth and Scriptures. And on you We have sent down the Reminder (the Qur'an) so that you may make clear to

[218] Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, *Kur'an'daki İslâm* (Istanbul: Sidre Publication, 1992)., 124.
[219] ibid., 656.

> humankind whatever is sent down to them (through you of the truth concerning their present and next life), and that they may reflect.[220]

This verse is the strongest evidence showing the *sunnah* is a principal source and the interpreter of ambiguous verses of the Qur'an.[221]

As for Zekeriya Beyaz, who generally follows the same line of thought as Ozturk, he is known for his ultra-national views. He argues that *hadith* emerged after the time of the Prophet, after 2nd century AH, and cannot be attributed to the Prophet. According to him, *hadith* have not been recorded and safeguarded since the time of the Prophet.

In summary, modernist logic—in whichever Muslim country it may be—basically exerts the thought structure of Western scholars and acquires a position of being their representative. After works endeavouring to create doubts and hesitation about the Qur'an, the direction of studies was changed to focus on *hadith* and *sunnah*. It is a fact that the aim of this was again in order to raise doubts, but this time on *hadith*.

Despite all the critiques and prejudices in the West as well as in the post-modern Islamic world, against the preservation and documentation of hadith we need to record that non scribe- Arabs' innate ability, though being largely illiterate, to memorise and remember exact words of the Prophet as their experiences unfolded in company with him in their lifetime. This unique legacy of transmission became an integral counselling/learning activity and prized past-time with immediate companions (*Sahabah*) who lived on for decades after the demise of the Prophet.

Conclusion

Old relations between Islam and the West have been instrumental in mutual cultural exchanges and scholarly research. In this research perspectives and views

[220] Qur'an 16:44.
[221] Yıldırım, *Kuran-ı Hakim ve Açıklamalı Meali*.p, 271–276.

focused on translation of the Qur'an into Western languages. Later on, with the expansion of Islam into Europe and the countries of Christianity and Judaism debates and dialogues emerged due to the influence of philosophies and the Renaissance movement in the West. This naturally led to the questioning of the origin of the Qur'an and determining its authenticity. Also, the correlations between God, the Qur'an and the Prophet were put on the table; critical research carried out on the subject from the viewpoint of deist ideology that does not accept a prophetic office in religions. These works on the Qur'an and the Prophet resulted in the discovery of *hadith*. During the course of events that followed, questions like the soundness of *hadith* and its position as the second primary source after the Qur'an emerged as a focal point of the works.

In the eyes of most Western scholars, *hadith* are not a reality connected to the Prophet. While some of them view *hadith* as common usage, habits, customs and traditions, others assert *hadith* are a phenomena forged from the 2nd century AH in connection with certain socio-political motivations. Contrary to the approach of Muslims scholars, which argues for the unique correlation between the Qur'an and *hadith*, Western scholars persistently steered away from establishing any kind of link between the two, and focused especially on raising doubts through disparaging criticisms. Works and research carried out in this respect have kept the Western and Muslims worlds busy over many years, and this is still continuing to some extent.

It is a well-known fact that Muslim scholars authored refutations based on historical data against assertions put forth by Western scholars. In this connection, it is necessary to mention the influence of research and thoughts in the West on reformist and modernist Muslim scholars. They are known, in their own countries, for their works, particularly on *hadith*, with the influence of Western thoughts. It is possible to say their efforts resulted, to some extent, in raising a number of doubts in the minds of

some Muslims, also in various deviations and deteriorations in certain religious matters. These damaging works done on religion and religious sources have caused certain tensions in political and commercial relations between Muslims and the West, and paved the way for frictions between the two civilisations.

Muslim scholars with strong traditional ties expressed their common view on works on the Qur'an and *hadith* originating from the West, saying they cannot be trusted and warned researchers they should be cautious when making reference to them. It is also a fact that these prejudiced criticisms and assertions on the Qur'an and *hadith* resulted in Muslim scholars returning to scholarly works on Islamic sciences, thus to re-familiarise themselves with their own sources and learn them better.

Another established fact is that some Western scholars, with their new works and theses, made valuable contributions to the softening of tense relations experienced between the East and West. It can also be said that certain political and mutual understanding have played a role in this relative softening in their views and assertions. In addition, the emergence of the profile of modernist and reformist Muslim scholars, and the popular views they came up with becoming defendable—even if it is in a marginal scale—may have had a comforting effect on Western scholars in relaxing their efforts. This can be viewed as another indirect influence in the softening of the tension between civilisations. Dialogue coming to forefront, rather than confrontation or argument, can also be viewed as another factor contributing to this softening.

As a final word, as long as the views and approaches of Muslim and Western scholars are commonsense, unprejudiced and based on scientific sources, mutual contacts and discussions can produce good results for the peace and welfare of members of both civilisations.

Chapter Three: M. Fethullah Gülen's understanding of *sunnah*

Brief Biography of Fethullah Gülen

Fethullah Gülen is a Muslim intellectual and a religious scholar. He was born in 1941 in Erzurum, a town in the eastern part of Turkey, where his first teachers were his parents. Gülen learnt the Qur'an from his father while he was a young child and also took his first Arabic lessons from him. He began his religious studies in local *madrasahs* and took lessons from well-known scholars in Islamic disciplines at that time. At the same time, he continued his education through private studies and acquired comprehensive knowledge in modern science subjects as well as grammar, history and philosophy.

At the age of 20, Gülen was appointed as imam of a mosque in Edirne, a western border town of Turkey. He continued his career as a Qur'an teacher in Izmir. He visited many towns in the eastern and western parts of Turkey to deliver sermons, lectures and conferences to small groups. These discourses covered subjects that focused primarily on religion, morality and other social issues. This made Gülen a well-known preacher in Turkey. He was arrested by the military rulers in 1971 and freed six months later without any charges laid. Returning to his teaching position, he continued his sermons, lectures and conferences until 1990.[222]

With his concerted efforts in interfaith and intercultural dialogue works, he met with Pope John Paul II in 1998. In 1999, due to increasing medical problems, Gülen moved to the United States. Currently, residing in America, Gülen continues to teach Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), *hadith* and other Islamic disciplines to students who reside with him.

[222] For more details: http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-life/about-fethullah-gulen/biography

Gülen is accepted in academic and non-academic circles as a leading expert in *hadith* and *sirah* (prophetic biography), especially in the field of philosophy of *sirah*. Gülen is quoted as saying, 'I spent my life investigating the *sunnah*,'[223] and it becomes apparent he has spent many years studying and researching *hadith* literature. As such, this statement, along with his teachers, the subjects he studied and the quality of education he received should be considered in detail. Finally, as mentioned in one of Ali Ünal's works, Gülen stands at a point where scholarship, wisdom and intellectuality meet together.[224] Ünal's view of Gülen is somewhat assertive and requires an objective investigation. However, the main focus of this research will be on Gülen's perception and teaching of *hadith* and related matters.

Gülen's understanding of *sunnah*

The previous section discussed the *sunnah* and its functions, *hadith* sciences, the recording and compilation of *hadith* from a traditional Islamic perspective along with critics of *sunnah* in the Muslim world as well as research carried out and theories developed by non-Muslim scholars on the concept of *sunnah.* In this section, Gülen's thoughts on *sunnah*—that is, definitions of *hadith*, discipline of *hadith*, the process of recording and compiling of *sunnah*, *sunnah*'s function in legislation as well as the depth of Gülen's knowledge of *sunnah*, his acceptances, methods he adopted, and his revised and contemporary interpretations of *sunnah*—will be examined in light of his works.

Gülen has never written a work specifically dedicated to *sunnah*. Instead, his views on the subject are dispersed throughout his works, i.e. books, articles, conferences, sermons and discourses, thus making a study of his observations on the subject rather challenging. However, Gülen's way of dealing with different aspects of

[223] Ali Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2002).p,307.
[224] ibid., 307–308.

sunnah within the context of many subjects offers researchers an invaluable opportunity to ascertain his views on *sunnah* more clearly and encourages them to discover his distinct interpretations within a rich archive. Furthermore, this also provides a firm ground with concrete examples for a contextual analysis to discover the relationship between *sunnah* and real-life issues. Nevertheless, the last chapter of Gülen's book entitled *Sonsuz Nur* (*Infinite Light*) brings together the outlines of his assessments on various aspects of *sunnah*.

What is the position of *sunnah* in legislation according to Gülen vis-à-vis the majority of Muslim scholars? Did Gülen, taking the needs of the contemporary time into account, bring in a new description or interpretation of the *sunnah*? Does he has different views on the recording and compilation of the *sunnah* or does he just repeat verbatim the classical historical account of *sunnah*? How much is known—and how sound is this knowledge—about the nature and the depth of Gülen's understanding of *sunnah*? To what extent does Gülen use *sunnah* in his works and public speeches? What are the exact meanings of Islamic terms, such as *sunnah*, *hadith*, *fiqh*, etc., according to Gülen? What are the places and importance of these terms in practical life and also from the doctrinal perspective? Does Gülen merely follow received knowledge generally agreed upon in Islamic history and leave newly-arising matters to respective experts to discuss? According to Gülen, what should be the main point of discussion in the interpretation of Islamic terms and technical issues in our time? These and similar questions are of primary importance and should be fully addressed in order to comprehend Gülen's understanding of *sunnah*. Attempting to seek answers to these questions would also reveal useful information on Gülen's methods and practical applications.

Gülen's description of *sunnah*

First of all, it is beneficial to focus on Gülen's approach to *sunnah*. It cannot be said that Gülen often mentions and explains in detail classical definitions of *sunnah* in his printed works and public discourses, or emphasises their acceptance, teaching and dissemination. This is understandable, considering Gülen's works target a world-wide populace, emphasising the notion of *hizmet* (service) rather than pushing a certain doctrine or normative and academic information. Perhaps it is for the same reason that he did not write a specific and systematic book on *sunnah*. However, most of his views on *sunnah* and its historical development have been collected in the second volume of his work titled *Sonsuz Nur (Infinity light)*. Drawing heavily on this work, Ibrahim Canan states Gülen uses traditional *hadith* definitions as his references, and embraces established practices and conventions adopted by a great number of traditional Muslim *hadith* scholars in various disciplines, such as *hadith* narration, discernment of *hadith*, *hadith* methodology, and all other related sub-branches.[225]

Hadith, literally meaning "something new" or "talk," is a term used for the traditions attributed to Prophet Muhammad and includes what he said, did or tacitly approved.[226] According to Gülen, *hadith* is a branch of knowledge teaching the Prophet's *aqwal* (words, speeches), *af'al* (deeds, actions) and *ahwal* (behaviours). He also affirms that the majority of Muslim scholars consider the tacit approvals of the Prophet as part of his actions. When it comes to his evaluations of *sunnah*, Gülen confirms this term covers the entirety of all speeches, deeds and silent approvals attributed to the Prophet. It is clear this definition of *sunnah* is synonymous to the term *hadith* according to Muslim jurists.[227] Gülen, like the majority Muslim scholars,

[225] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 65, 67.
[226] Çalış, *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*.
[227] M. Fethullah Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010)., 381, 382.

concurs that these two terms are identical in meaning.[228] However, he generally prefers the usage of *sunnah* as a technical term, which is more comprehensive and covers the practical and transactional aspects of prophetic traditions. Primarily, *hizmet*-oriented activities, being the aim of the movement he leads, appear to be the most rational explanation of his choice of the term *sunnah* instead of *hadith*. In this thesis, the term *sunnah* will be used to refer to both *hadith* and *sunnah* to avoid misunderstanding and confusion.

Canan's assessment of Gülen's acceptance of traditional *sunnah* definitions of methodologists and jurists proves to be accurate as Gülen uses these definitions in his works in a concise manner when needed. Gülen's referencing these classical sources directly may be interpreted to mean that he deems these definitions sufficient for the purpose of reflecting the true nature of the *sunnah*. Gülen made no attempt in his works to come up with a new definition of *sunnah*. Gülen's words illustrate that he—repeating various terminological connotations of *sunnah*—stands in the same line as scholars of the classical period, and leaves no space for argument:

> This term [*sunnah*] has also different terminological connotations according to each group of traditionists, methodologists, and jurists. Traditionists view it as including everything connected to the religious commandments reported from the Messenger and categorized, according to the *Hanafi* legal school, as obligations, necessities, practices particular to or encouraged by the Prophet himself as recommended and desirable.
>
> Methodologists consider it to be every word, deed, and approval of the Messenger as related by his companions. Jurists, who approach it as the opposite of innovation in religion (*bid'a*), consider it a synonym for *hadith*. They use it for the Prophet's words, deeds, and approvals, all of which provide a basis for legislation and categorizing people's actions.[229]

Gülen's approach is to explore and explain to his followers the safeguarding of *sunnah*, its legal status and its position in the daily life of a Muslim. In other words,

[228] For further information, see Zekiyyüddin Şaban, *İslâm Hukuk İlminin Esasları ('Usul al-Fiqh al-Islami)*, trans. Ibrahim Kafi Dönmez (Ankara: Diyanet Publications, 1996), p, 71.
[229] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Muhammad, the Messenger of God; an Analysis of the Prophet`S Life*, trans. Ali Ünal (New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2005).p, 315.

his method is to elaborate on the practical aspects of *sunnah* rather than getting caught up in scholarly arguments about the details of how to define the term *sunnah*; he considers arguments put forth by *salaf* ("predecessor"; first three generations of Muslims) would suffice to clarify the issue for an average Muslim. If any further arguments are deemed necessary among scholars, it is a matter for experts in the field of *hadith*.[230] What is of primary importance for Gülen is to restudy the resources and terminology related to *sunnah*, review their practicability, and prioritise and, if necessary, reinterpret their practical application according to the needs of the contemporary period.

In Gülen's thinking, social life and modern sciences are closely related to *sunnah*. Therefore, focusing on this aspect of *sunnah* is more important than discussing *sunnah*-related classical terms and definitions. He really wants to socialise *sunnah* and believes that only by this way one can update the content of the prophetic tradtion. Gülen's works imply the unnecessary nature of focusing on classical definitions of *sunnah* or spending time holding discussions on the issue. This is not mentioned in his writings or discourses, most probably out of his respect for the scholars of *salaf* (predecessors). Looking into the matter from an academic and relevancy perspective, engaging in classical terminology beyond the required level of knowledge would be considered a practice of repetition of existing knowledge rather than stimulating the mind and opening ways to new deductions and theories. This, in turn, may lead to a vicious circle of never-ending scholastic arguments. He primarily believes that sufficiently understanding the essence of the matter that constitutes the basis for a given discipline of science would save scientific advancement from stagnancy. What is important for this is the willpower and mind to execute their share

[230] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.(*The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*

of tasks.[231] Gülen's thoughts on classical definitions of *sunnah* may be read and evaluated along these lines. In other words, according to him, dealing with the essence of a matter is of prime importance.

On the basis of this criterion, according to Canan, in terms of the presentation of the theory and practice of *sunnah* according to the needs of the present time, Gülen offers—besides established traditional definitions—certain differences and new approaches with a kind of richness.[232] In other words, being an eloquent and articulate speaker, Gülen introduced a finesse and sublimity into otherwise desiccated scholarly language. This approach of Gülen's may be interpreted as explaining the characteristics of *sunnah* through different expressions, rather than providing a new self-contained definition. For instance, Gülen comes up with a rather elegant definition for *sunnah* as follows:

> *Sunnah* is of divine origin and the second primary source in legislation, which has been accepted and safeguarded by the majority of Muslim scholars and referenced in all Islamic scholarly issues since the time of the Prophet and his companions.[233]

With this definition, Gülen puts vitality and vigour into the *sunnah*, which has been subjected to suspicion and criticism during the last two centuries.[234] Thus, Gülen emancipates *hadith* from the dullness of its classical scholarly definitions—without compromising or challenging established fundamental principles—and, emphasising its functional aspect, strives for connecting *sunnah* with social sciences of our time and the educational and scientific data available. Making an endeavour to determine *sunnah*'s position among other disciplines stands out in this approach. Instead of simply describing *sunnah* as the words and deeds of the Prophet, Gülen seeks to

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[231] *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler -1(Questions and Answers*)(Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 19.
[232] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 69.
[233] M. Fethullah Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 382.
[234] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 65, 67.

thoroughly analyse *sunnah*, discover its scientific aspect concealed in its unseen dimension, and to establish a correlation with the modern era. Consequently, and by giving it a new perspective, he highlights the third dimension of *sunnah*.

A more rigorous analysis of Gülen's definition yields a more effective and clearer understanding of inferences that have been explained so far. Gülen's atypical interpretations of certain *hadith* represent a new aspect to definitions in, and contribution to, *hadith* literature. While assigning future educators a mission, he invites them to ponder the following *hadith*: 'People are like mines of gold and silver; those who were excellent in *Jahiliyyah* (during the Days of Ignorance) are [also] excellent in Islam, when they attain knowledge.'[235] With the interpretation he brings to this *hadith*, Gülen advocates character analysis as an important factor and the first stage of human education, thus making a distinct contribution to education methods.[236] He articulates that human physiognomy reflects one's actual inner emotional and mental state, and calls for the development of individual education methods for different human moods. Although Gülen appears to provide a mere interpretation of a *hadith*, his interpretation of this specific *hadith* demonstrates his unique portrayal of *hadith* with respect to understanding the human character.

By referring to the companions in his definition, Gülen points to *al-'asr al-sa'adah* (the Age of Felicity)[237] and draws attention to the fact the *sunnah* has been taken care of with utmost sensitivity alongside the Qur'an. Furthermore, he stresses the attribute of '*adalah* (justice)[238] of the companions. In doing so, he focuses upon *sunnah-sahabah* (the companions) correlations, and ultimately to the authenticity of

[235] Bukhari, *Manaqib* 1; Muslim, *Birr* 160.
[236] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 396.
[237] *Hadith*: "The people of my generation are the best, then those who follow them, and then those who follow the latter..." Bukhari, *Shahadat*, 9; Muslim, *Fadhail al-Sahabah*, 214.
[238] In Islamic literature, *adalah* is a characteristic possessed by the companions, their followers and the generation that followed them, meaning 'justice and uprigtness' in terms of transmitting the *sunnah* to next generations without corruption.

sunnah by pointing to the meticulousness of the companions. At the same time, he draws his audience's attention specifically to *sunnah*, which has been mentioned with confidence alongside the Qur'an, and its chain of transmission through the course of history.[239] It is almost impossible to deny the fact that Gülen from time to prefer to use pastoral discourse rather than pure academic one. Thus his reflection on the status of the companions should be read in the light of this dual reading.

Gülen often supports his thoughts and views with quotations and anecdotes carefully selected from the time of the companions and successors. Similarly, when elaborating on *sunnah* and its characteristics, his comments are substantiated through the use of examples from the same slice of history. When he needs to use the term 'the majority of the scholars', he makes sure he illustrates it with an example from that particular era. For example:

> Anas Ibn Sirin, from among the successors, mentions that when I arrived in Kufah in the middle of the second century A.H. there were approximately 4,000 qualified *hadith* students in Kufah mosques, and he reckons that about 400 of them were jurists.[240]

Taking into account the socio-cultural and economic conditions of the era, these figures could represent the substantial number of *hadith* students and jurists in one town. Assuming that the majority of these students travelled from other populated areas in search of knowledge, shows the burden undertaken, the earnest commitment and the system employed for the study of *sunnah.* While pointing to the care exercised when dealing with *sunnah*, Gülen again highlights the large number of students and teaching staff. Kufah was not the only centre of education at that time; it is believed that there were other towns with similar capacities in the area. With this elucidation, Gülen strives to present *sunnah* in a functional and interactive position within the

[239] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 108.
[240] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 498.

society and, while emphasising the confidence on *hadith* collections, he draws attention to careful criticism.[241]

Besides these laborious presentations, Gülen also explains *sunnah* within the contexts of positive sciences. Establishing various connections between *sunnah* and physical sciences, he attempts to achieve an agreement between them. Accordingly, he rejects the approach advocating '*sunnah* is nothing more than a collection of advices exclusive to the morality and worship.'[242] In this way, he attempts to prove the Qur'an and *sunnah* are a comprehensive program of civilisation that meets the needs of society. According to Gülen, *sunnah* offers believers values and principles on matters such as law, education, economics, morality, politics, international relations, medicine, positive sciences and dress codes.[243] With this approach, he highlights the shortcomings of contemporary thinkers and researchers in their scepticism of *sunnah*. He challenges thinkers and researchers to examine *sunnah* in more detail, rather than merely accept its classical definitions. Considering his approaches, it is possible to say that Gülen looks into *sunnah* from a different and pro-active perspective. What is different is Gülen's part in encouraging fresh approaches and contributions of new interpretations and understanding.

These kinds of interpretations reveal Gülen's definition of *sunnah*. His tendency to turn to the core and the practical aspect of *sunnah* reflects on his views and mission, thereby distinguishing him from his contemporaries. For this reason, it can be said that, according to Gülen, the path to true existence goes through bringing together thought and action; in effect, thoughts and actions are conducive to the change and renewal of society in a positive sense.[244] This presents a new 'Gülen

[241] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 111.
[242] ibid.
[243] ibid. 112.
[244] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* ,p, 173, 174.

theory'. According to Gülen's systematic thought, presentation and content are just as important as the container when dealing with religious terminology. Although the container is directly related to what it contains, in most cases its content becomes more prominent.

In conclusion, Gülen's approaches to the early Islamic scholars' definition of *sunnah* as 'words, actions and behaviours of the Prophet' with respect. In essence, he is closely linked to the early Islamic scholars' classical definitions of *hadith*; however, when it comes to the presentation, exemplification and explanation of *sunnah*, he brings in some novelties with shades of richness in accordance with conditions and practices of current times.[245] With this side of him, and in respect to defining the *sunnah*, Gülen stands out among others, portraying an active man with strong beliefs who is intimately connected to his roots of moral values. Therefore, he conceptualises the social and individual fabrics he is weaving as *sunnah*-centred structures, and in doing so, he takes *sunnah* as his guidance. More particularly, he emphasises the values *sunnah* contributes to the social structure and reform.

Gülen believes his thesis of making *sunnah* functional and applying it to all spheres of life will result in the whole society being turned into a school environment, and all modern technical facilities, such as the internet and mass-media, will assume the functionality of knowledge centres.[246] Thus, society will become integrated with its material and moral cultural values. According to Gülen's thought, this is the reunification of a nation—which harbours respect for the *sunnah*—with its national and historical dynamics. At this point, practical *sunnah*'s function is substantial. The conclusion derived from Gülen's focus on *sunnah* in his works and his interpretations is that defining and interpreting the *sunnah* in accordance with the perception, style

[245] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 69.
[246] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* p, 175.

and understanding of the modern era—but always strictly following the rules and bounding with *ijtihad* (reasoning) of the very well-established traditions—is a necessity and responsibility resting on the shoulders of today's Muslims toward future generations.[247]

The evolution of Islamic and *Hadith* discipline according to Gülen

Hadith and *sunnah* enjoy considerable importance and effect in Gülen's works. It stands to reason that he must have carefully studied the overall authenticity and reliability of this system, which he has accepted as a basis for his own faith. It is paramount for him to ensure that *sunnah* has been safeguarded from errors and tampering, and transmitted to current times in a condition as pure and authentic as possible. *Sunnah*, according to his view, is one of the two fundamental primary sources of Islam next to the Qur'an. It is impossible to establish the foundation of Islam without *hadith* and *sunnah*.[248] He is convinced the conditions required for establishing the safeguarding and health of *sunnah* must be as sound and prudent as the prerequisites for safeguarding the Qur'an. Gülen's systematic thought has been shaped by this *hadith*: 'The best word is the word of Allah [Qur'an]; the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad [*sunnah*]. The most evil of deeds are innovations (*bid'ah*) [deviation from *sunnah*]. And every *bid'ah* is *dalalah* (deviation).'[249] So, this well-known *hadith* constitutes the basic starting point of his occupation with the science of *hadith*.[250] Gülen established his own rectified criteria to determine the reliability of *hadith*, according to which he supports his arguments with references from classical *hadith* sources. In fact, to express a view or defend or prove a hypothesis, he derives his paradigms from *sunnah*. Highlighting the particular *hadith*

[247] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken 1(The Statue of Our Souls)* (Istanbul: Nil publishing, 2011).p, 67, 68.
[248] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 591.
[249] Muslim, *Juma*, 43; Nasâî, *Iydayn*, 22; Ibn Mâja, *Muqaddimah*, 7.
[250] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2(.The Messenger of God: Muhammad*) p, 591.

stating 'Allah likes that when you do anything, you do it excellently,'[251] suggests Gülen takes it as his guidance in *hadith* and other scientific studies.[252] Ensuring all details and sound supportive material, when focusing on a study subject, is the basis of his work principles. Therefore, and in light of the depth of his knowledge in *hadith* disciplines, his interpretation of the part of the above *hadith* 'the most evil of deeds' as 'deviation from *sunnah*' and 'increase in innovations' should be considered normal.[253] Starting from this point would normally lead one to a conclusion that he must be a very keen student of *hadith* and would take a very cautious approach when investigating the soundness of a tradition. For the above *hadith* and those others that follow it, which are carefully selected for his works, reflect a strong emphasis on the seriousness of the matter.[254] His way of selecting *hadith* reveals lessons and responsibilities he derived from *sunnah*. While discharging his responsibilities, Gülen confirms the authenticity of *sunnah*, and at the same time, establishes his belief and theories on solid foundations. Otherwise, the possibility of *sunnah* being unreliable—considering he founded his belief, thoughts and actions upon *sunnah*—would put him face to face with a very awkward situation in his next steps and render his faith very problematic. Defending a theory, project or his actions on the basis of a doubtful source of reference could leave him facing many questions and criticisms. Ultimately, Gülen would be questioned about his understanding of *sunnah*, which is his source of inspiration and starting point at individual, social and civilisational levels. Therefore, in his view, this source—which is the foundation of the faith of a community—must be freed from all doubts and the structural soundness of the discipline of *hadith* methodology—which is instrumental in transmitting this valuable source to our time—must be confirmed.

[251] Abu Ya'la, *Musnad*, 7/349; Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, 1/275.
[252] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 71.
[253] ibid.591-594
[254] ibid.

Gülen considers following the *sunnah* and referencing all his thoughts and actions on *sunnah* as an 'action'.[255] He focuses his intellectual approach on *sunnah*-based scholarly and scientific research for, according to him, religion and science always coexisted all along the history of Islam and never collided.[256] Religion and genuine science are the two faces of the truth; religion has been fundamental for science to achieve its objective.[257] As he considers *sunnah* the purpose of his life,[258] which also shapes his thoughts, it is only by nature that he adopts *sunnah* as a way of life and occupies himself with its soundness and reliability. Therefore, it is inconceivable to imagine Gülen uninterested and keeping himself aloof from the science of *hadith*.

Gülen explains, the early generation of Islam closely followed and benefitted from scientific progress during their time, while strictly adhering to the Qur'an and *sunnah*. This may be one reason that he often mentions in his works efforts exerted by theologians, jurists and scholars of *hadith* with regard to recording and safeguarding *sunnah* during the times of the companions, successors and followers of the successors. Therefore, Gülen closely following the *sunnah* in such a way discloses some ideas about his sensitivities concerning the discipline of *hadith*. Glancing at his views on *hadith* science one detects a new perspective in his understanding and interpretation of the discipline.[259] He usually illustrates through anecdotes the early Islamic scholars' works on authentication and codification of *hadith*. He studies *salaf*'s meticulousness and practices, and finds them healthy and reasonable. Therefore, he does not criticise their applied principles; he does not consider

[255] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* 175.
[256] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Vuslat Muştusu Kırık Testi-8(Glad Tidings of a Reunion)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 202.
[257] *Ölçü Ve Yoldaki Işıklar* (*Pearls of Wisdom)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 31.
[258] Latif Erdoğan, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi, Küçük Dünyam* (Istanbul: Ufuk Publishing, 2006).p, 45.
[259] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 69.

modifying or rejecting them.[260] He is confident that the methodology they developed is reliable although it can be taken further by modern scholarly approaches. He affirms that *sunnah* has been—beyond any doubt—recorded, memorised, codified and safeguarded by critical researchers and transmitted to current times since the early days of Islam.[261]

It is necessary to make a brief evaluation of one of the disciplines of Islamic sciences, *'usul al-fiqh* (methodology of Islamic jurisprudence). According to Islamic sources, *'usul al-fiqh* is directly related to the discipline of *hadith*. A closer look at Gülen's views about the status of these two disciplines reveals his thoroughness about the discipline of *hadith*. For instance, in spite of his deep respect for early Islamic scholars, Gülen maintains the necessity of revising the discipline of *'usul al-fiqh*, which involves the scanning of all collected works produced in the past and, ultimately, formulating a new, alternative methodology. He elaborates the necessity of a diligent process of sifting and rearranging all *fiqh* topics—excluding those related to worship—according to the needs of the day. He argues that legal opinions based on customs may be archaic or outdated and no longer relevant to contemporary time. Such legal opinions should be judiciously reviewed by a committee of experts equipped with updated knowledge of the current socio-economic situation. By his statement, '…it is important to emphasise once more that all these activities must be executed by an expert committee,' Gülen demonstrates his persistence and sensitivity on this issue.[262]

While Gülen exhibits such diligence on the revision of the *fiqh* discipline, what is his standing on *hadith* methodology? According to Canan, Gülen does not think

[260] ibid.
[261] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 522.
[262] *Fasıldan Fasıla 4* (*From Chapter to Chapter)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2001).p, 140, 141.

that a revision of *hadith* methodology is necessary[263] because *hadith* literature is generally devoid of juridical issues and free from legal opinions, customs and practices that can be changed according to various influences over time. Zaheed al-Kawthari, argues that early Islamic scholars' evaluations on *hadith* deserve to be respected, and says:

> *Hadith* discipline does not deal with events and issues—as in the *fiqh* discipline—that will keep arising as civilisations progress to the Day of Judgment. Therefore, scholars of *hadith* do not need to make *ijtihad* on *hadiths*. All they need to do is memorise and safeguard traditions transmitted from *salaf*.[264]

According to Canan, Gülen's views are similar to Zaheed al-Kawthari's views. Gülen does not see any requirement relevant to the discipline of *hadith*, like al-Kawthari. In fact, Gülen's works bear no trace of such a view on *hadith* methodology. Gülen affirms that, consistent with Islamic literature, scholarly efforts have continued in succession beginning from the time of the Prophet. The crux of the matter is an unbroken line of recording (technically, an *isnad*), preserving and transmitting *hadith* safely to the future. There is no mentioning of verdicts, legal opinions or any other requirements.[265] This confirms no need has arisen for such scholarly efforts. What is needed from this point onward is to safeguard and disseminate *hadith* as much as the available facilities permit.[266] Clearly, for Gülen, hadith scholars are like pharmacists whereas the jurists are doctors, thus they have the final word for ijtihad on the basis of the work done by the pharmacists.

An important point relevant to this matter needs to be mentioned: *hadith* is a fundamental source of reference in Islamic jurisprudence, and indeed, its reliability has been a subject of careful study for jurists also. Legal rulings based on *hadith*—

[263] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 69.
[264] Zaheed al-Kawthari ,*Shurut al-A'immah al-Khamsah*, 118
[265] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2. (The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* p, 518, 519.
[266] *Yenilenme Cehdi, Kırık Testi 12(Endeavor for Renewal)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2012).p, 238.

which is directly correlated with the Qur'an—constitute a valuable source for Islamic sciences. A jurist involved with this process is a scholar who can use the Qur'an, *sunnah* and *ijma'* (consensus of scholars) as sources of reference, and who has the aptitude to deduce religious verdicts from these sources.[267] In other words, there is another class of scholars, *fuqaha'* (jurists), engaged in *hadith* discipline besides the scholars of *hadith*. For jurists, the basis for legal rulings is the authentic *sunnah*, which is free from any doubt.[268] Otherwise, legitimacy of the verdicts would be under doubt and suspicion. According to Muslim scholars, transactions cannot be based on lies and presumptions, but rather are based on evidence.[269] Lies and presumptions are prohibited by the Qur'an.[270] Given Gülen's perspective, a jurist must know very well the particular *hadith* that he accepts as a basis for a legal ruling, must be convinced about its authenticity and possess the qualities of a *hadith* scholar. This is the reason why, in Islamic literature, the criteria that qualifies jurists are the same as the prerequisites for scholars of *hadith.* Gülen draws attention to the criteria employed by early Islamic scholars in the qualification of expert jurists and *hadith* scholars in the discipline of *hadith*, and recognises their discretions and assessments.[271] According to the early Islamic scholars' criteria, Abu Hanifah (d. 772 CE), Imam Abu Yusuf (d. 798 CE), Imam Muhammad (d. 805 CE), Imam Shafi'i (d. 820 CE) and Imam Malik (d. 795 CE) are all recognised as *fuqaha'*. However, the same cannot be said as easily for Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241 AH),[272] who memorised almost one million *hadith*.

[267] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 499.
[268] *Fikir Atlası,(The Atlas of Ideas)* (Istanhul: Nil Publishing, 2006).p, 140.
[269] ibid.
[270]'O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, for some suspicion is a grave sin (liable to God's punishment); and do not spy (on one another), nor backbite (against one another). Would any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it! Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Surely God is One Who truly returns repentance with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, All-Compassionate (particularly towards His believing servants).' (Qur'an 49:12)
[271] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*. *(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* p, 499, 500.
[272] Ahmed Ibn Hanbal (d. 780/855) was born and died in Baghdad. He is reported to have memorised one million hadith. He was a student of Imam al-Shafi'i. His famous work, *Al-Musnad*, contains forty thousand *hadith*. He is the founder of the Hanbelite *madhhab*.

Abu Ja'far al-Tabari (d. 310 AH)[273] has been criticised by Hanbelites when he said 'Ahmad ibn Hanbal is not a jurist.' By saying, 'Whether Ahmad ibn Hanbal is a jurist or not, with this statement, al-Tabari is trying to explain to us a reality about the conditions and seriousness of being a jurist,'[274] Gülen points to the seriousness of erudition and reliability of sciences during that period of time in the history of Islam. According to Gülen, the criteria for qualifying as a jurist are very stringent. Satisfying these criteria and having one's views and legal opinions recognised by other Muslim scholars is a serious stage to accomplish. A very well-known figure like Ahmad ibn Hanbal has been criticised on the basis of traditions he transmitted according to these criteria. Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597 AH)—even though Ahmad ibn Hanbal was his imam—conceded that numerous *hadith* mentioned in his *musnad* were either *mawdu'* (fabricated, false), *da'if* (weak) or *matruk* (disregarded).[275] Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (773-852 AH) re-examined all the traditions Ibn al-Jawzi found defective, and declared them all sound and healthy, except 13 of them. He mentions these 13 traditions in his work titled *al-Qawl al-Musaddad fi Musnad Ahmad*.[276] As understood from these examples Gülen used as sources of reference in his work, the science of *hadith* and other related disciplines have been kept under stringent scrutiny despite the severe conditions of the era.[277] He endeavours to—perhaps, justify firstly his own disposition, and then—convince his audience. With this approach, Gülen does not only re-examine and justify the soundness of the *hadith* he uses, but also draws attention to the reality of *sunnah*. According to Gülen's rationale, these events that happened in history constitute evidence to the factuality and recording of the subjects to which they relate. On the other hand, proving the opposite can only be possible by

[273] Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (838/923 CE) was an Islamic scholar. His most influential and best known work is the Qur'anic commentary known as *Tafsir al-Tabari.*
[274] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 499.
[275] ibid. 467.
[276] Ibn Hajar, *al-Qawl al-musaddad fī al-dhabb 'an al-Musnad li al-Imam Aḥmad*, 1-45.
[277] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 467-468.

disproving the existence of these historical events, and the onus is on the opponents to prove their case.

Gülen does not limit himself with only textual study of traditions, but also pays serious attention to the linguistic excellence of the text, from which he derives conclusions. For example, a famous pre and Islamic woman poet al-Hansa (d. 645 CE), possessed such a high level of linguistic proficiency that she could detect eight mistakes in a four-verse poem spoken by well-known poet of the Prophet, Hassan b. Sabit (d. 674 CE).[278] With this example, Gülen emphasises the linguistic adeptness of the companions.[279]

Evaluating from a scholarly perspective, each one of these events can be no more than a *khabar al-wahid* (single report). However, in Gülen's mind, when their numbers reach certain levels, they gain a quasi-kind of *mutawatir* (successive narration) status from a contextual point of view. At this juncture, Gülen's rationale appears to be in perfect conformity with principles defining *mutawatir hadith* in Islamic literature. What is also understood from the above assessments is that Gülen has no doubt about the level of expertise of the companions, followers and scholars of *hadith* to determine whether a text was a *hadith* or not. Companions with these qualities have become role models for future generations, thus leading the way for the emergence of scholars of *hadith* with similar expertise and meticulousness. Hence, when people asked, 'fabricated *hadiths* are widespread [in Muslim world]; what are we going to do [about it]?' 'Abd Allah ibn Mubarak (d. 181 CE)[280] calmly answered: 'No need to panic; to counter that [threat], we have experts to distinguish between

[278] The Prophet prayed for him saying 'O Allah, support him *Ruh al-Quds* (Holy Spirit)!' (Bukhari, *Salat*, 68; Muslim, *Fadha'il al-Sahabah*, 151–152).
[279] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*. *(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* p, 502.
[280] Abdullah b. Mubarak (736/797) was from among the *Taba' al-Tabi'in* (generation that followed *Tabi'in*). His full name is 'Abd Allah ibn Mubarak b. Wadih Hanzali Tamimi; his *kunyah* is Abu 'Abd al-Rahman. He was a scholar of *hadith* and *fiqh*. He was born in Marw during the time of the Umayyad Caliph Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik and died in a place called Hit near Baghdad.

authentic and fabricated *hadiths*.'[281] According to Gülen, scholars of *hadith* with such a degree of expertise certainly attained the capability to detect the divine connotation enshrined in an authentic narration, and approve it—even before examining its chain of transmission—or to sense the contradiction in a false *hadith* and reject it.[282]

Gülen's insistence on convincing his interlocutor in this regard drives the course of the discussion to different dimensions, and naturally, necessitates more relevant examples to illustrate his point. By bringing examples from the Turkish and world literature, he endeavours to bring the issue closer to mind, makes comparisons and puts forward some rational and logical arguments. This is another point demonstrating his confidence in his own views and convictions as well as in his sources of reference. A person who repeatedly read great figures such as Dante (d. 1321), Shakespeare (d. 1616), Molière (d. 1673) and Tolstoy (d. 1910) from world literature, and similarly, Mehmet Akif Ersoy (d. 1936), Nurettin Topçu (d. 1975), Necip Fazil Kısakürek (d. 1983), and Sezai Karakoç (b. 1933) from Turkish literature, and who thoroughly studied them, can easily and safely distinguish their words and texts from among piles of other texts. This is possible because of variations in writing style or penmanship. According to Gülen, if this is the situation in literature, the case of *hadith* scholars—who are experts in Arabic language, have dedicated their lives to the study of *hadith* and are so closely associated with *sunnah* round-the-clock—would not be any different. As they are continually engaged in the *sunnah* of the Prophet, they developed the aptitude to tell if it is a prophetic tradition or not as soon as they start uttering the words of a narration.[283] Looking from the perspective of these qualities, it is safe to assume that early Islamic scholars were masters of speech and judges of vocabulary. In addition, Gülen, in contrast to many modern Muslim and

[281] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 85.
[282] For further information, see Babanzâde, *Tecrîd*, 1, 283.
[283] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*. *(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*p, 463.

non-Muslim critics of *hadith,* offers textual analysis rather than limiting himself to the traditionally applied criticism of the chain of *isnad.* Gülen also believes that there were some individual Muslims in early and classical period of Islam who displayed a similar approach. For example, if Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tahawi (d.321 AH) had appeared in one of the locations where *hadith* literature developed, he would have been recognised as more eminent than Imam Bukhari. He was able to sort flimsy words from sound ones, evaluate *hadith* and work comfortably like an artisan in this discipline.[284] Evaluating the companions and followers in light of Gülen's explanations infers the conclusion they were closely associated with and strictly adhered to the Prophet and his message.

During that period where the language factor was so prominent, narrating a tradition in its original wording represented a different significance. Gülen draws attention to the strict adherence to narration criteria when reciting or discussing a tradition, although reporting a *hadith* in meaning only instead of its complete original text is permissible. With this approach, he demonstrates his respect and adherence to the views of early Islamic scholars. When discussing the companions' strictness in this issue, he brings anecdotes from the early period of Islam to clarify the subject.[285] In Bukhari, al-Bara' b. 'Azib (d. 690 CE) narrates:

> Allah's Apostle said to me, "When you want to go to bed, perform ablution as you do for prayer, then lie down on your right side and say: (…) While I was memorising it, I said, 'Your Apostle whom You have sent.' The Prophet said, 'No, but say: 'in Your Prophet whom You have sent.'[286]

As can be seen in this example, the Prophet—for a reason we can sense intuitively or not—reminds his companion that he should say 'prophet' instead of 'apostle,' and sets

[284] *Fasıldan Fasıla 3(From Chapter to Chapter)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 205, 206.
[285] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 450, 451.
[286] Bukhari, *Daawat*, 6.

up a criterion through this narration.[287] Here, at first glance, Gülen may seem to follow a literalist approach. However, to have a clearer picture of the matter, it is useful to pay careful attention to Gülen's academic sensitivities. A closer look at his life story and the whole corpus of his works reveals that his main objective is not literalism, but a burning desire to quest more deeply for the wisdom behind the Prophet's statement, which is of prime importance for him from a theological perspective. In other words, he generally endeavours to penetrate to the deeper meaning by concentrating his focus on the literal meaning. With the word *nabi* (prophet), which is mentioned in the above *hadith,* he denotes its meanings, such as 'explanation,' 'spreading' and 'applying/practising.' In this fashion, he presents to his interlocutor lessons that can be taken from *sunnah* and practicable injunctions, and emphatically highlights his views on the practical aspect of *sunnah*.

According to Gülen, verbatim reporting of traditions—the way the companions and their followers reported from the Prophet with their utmost attention and accuracy—constitutes an important principle in the discipline of *hadith.* Due to this normative formation, great scholars of *hadith*—who paid maximum attention to the nuances in the meanings of words and to textual variations in *hadith*—were brought up during later periods, thus resulting in the emergence of the great tradition of *al-rihlah* (journeying in the pursuit of knowledge).

Gülen also mentions in his works certain principles established by earlier scholars' generation concerning narration of *hadith* by meaning and considers the rationality behind it as permissible.[288] While approving this *salaf* method, he draws attention to certain qualities of the narrator, which are also recognised by scholars. He deliberates on qualities such as the narrator's perfect command of the Arabic

[287] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 451.
[288] ibid. 505.

language, a sound understanding of the full meaning of the *hadith,* and particularly choice of word to correspond to the whole context of the word in the original text to such an extent that *hadith* experts should not be able to detect any deviation in the meaning. Furthermore, he justifies this method of narration only in a particular situation where the original text of the *hadith* is lost in its entirety. In accordance with the saying, 'a thing cannot be abandoned altogether just because some parts thereof are missing,' he advocates benefiting from *sunnah* as much as possible.[289] While establishing *hadith* on a solid ground—on the basis of these criteria—he acts persistently and cautiously to eliminate any chance of even a smallest part of the *hadith* being lost.

At this point, it is relevant to highlight another characteristic of Gülen's aptitude in interpreting narration by meaning. Narrating a *hadith* by meaning is a serious task that requires expertise: competence in Arabic language as much as to be able to differentiate between words that are fully or partly synonymous and competence in *hadith* narration, including all details, are the two fundamental requirements. Canan asserts that Gülen possesses these linguistic requirements and presents as supporting evidence the major part of Gülen's prolific works being based on *hadith* and *sunnah*.[290]

Another important factor in the *hadith* discipline is the discussion and testing of traditions thoroughly in terms of chain of transmission and text. As discussed in chapter one, a *hadith* has two main parts: *sanad* (the chain of transmitters) and *matn* (the text narrated). The number of transmitters varies from only a few names to some very long chains.[291] In Islamic literature, it is not a healthy approach to speculate doubts about traditions that have been filtered through these criteria and authenticated

[289] ibid. 505, 506.
[290] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 115.
[291] Çalış, *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*.

during the time of the companions and the period of *salaf* that followed. Considering the case of an authentic tradition, various famous scholars of *hadith* reached the same *hadith* through different methods and chains of transmission, and had the opportunity to closely examine it for elements that could weaken or injure its authenticity, thus conducting their assessments based on solid justifications. In a way, through academic discussions, they established the identity of the *hadith* with the Prophet at its roots. Yahya b. Ma'in (d. 233 AH) clarifies the rationale of this discussion and examination, saying, 'We cannot recognise a *hadith* unless we write it down [at least] fifty times.'[292] By virtue of this situation, Ibn Salah (d. 1245 CE), who is considered the founding father of *usul al-hadith* discipline, argued that what was established by the early Islamic scholars concerning the authenticity of a *hadith* is not permissible to be changed by scholars of later periods.[293] Gülen sees these principles and criteria reasonable, and he acts in accordance with these views regarding following *salaf*. He also acknowledges the mutual discussion method as a determining factor in the discipline of *hadith.* On this issue, he bases his views on the advice given by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and Ibn 'Abbas to their students: 'Memorise these *hadiths* and discuss among yourselves. For some of them will remind you some others. Therefore, you must continuously discuss them among yourselves.'[294]

In Islamic literature, the term *al-rihlah* constitutes an important factor with regard to safeguarding the authenticity of *sunnah* and its reliable reporting, and has been a subject of serious study in the course of history. *Al-rihlah* is a term denoting a laborious long-distance journey in the pursuit of seeking knowledge to study and confirm the authenticity of *hadith* directly from well-versed narrators during the time of the companions and centuries that followed. It can also be described as a difficult

[292] Al-Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, 2/420.
[293] Ibn Salâh, *Mukaddima*, 11–12.
[294] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 451.

and painstaking scholarly sensitivity that can give clues about the source, health and method of narration of *sunnah*.[295] According to Gülen, focusing only on this particular term and thoroughness in narrations may lead the way to the emergence of healthy views about *sunnah*.

In the course of history, the method represented by this Islamic term can be observed constituting an example for other disciplines, such as experimental sciences, medicine, mathematics, literature and philosophy.[296] This lead, in time, to the development of various *madrasah* and education centres in numerous locations, and ultimately, lead the way to increasing research, new discoveries and rapid spread of knowledge to different places, thus laying the foundation for the promotion of learning.[297] Furthermore, it is possible to say it has resulted in inter-civilisational relations in sciences, and exchange of thoughts and views in the field of philosophy. Gülen presents his views to his interlocutor through the words of a famous Western thinker, Saint Martin, who stated: 'ripe fruits are falling on the West, but the roots of the tree are in Asia,'[298] to highlight all this.

In the discipline of *hadith*, establishing the authenticity of every tradition, tracing its chain of transmission back to the Prophet, investigating the narrator's qualities in terms of justice and memory, and verifying its text so strictly to the point where one can see if a letter has been used in a different position are considered the main principles of *al-rihlah*. The aim of this stringent process is to establish the continuity of the chain of transmission through the followers and companions back to the Prophet. There are some examples in this regard. Gülen illustrates the phenomena of *al-rihlah* through certain anecdotes he chooses from the time of the companions

[295] ibid., 455.
[296] *Kalb İbresi Kırık Testi-9(The Heart's Cursor)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 245.
[297] ibid., 243, 244.
[298] Ö. Faruk Tuncer, *Fethullah Gülen İnsanın Özündeki Sevgi*, 16 vols. (Istanbul: Ufuk Publishing, 2004).p, 241.

and followers. He affirms that the companions showed care and solicitude to such an extent that they organised journeys to distant places (*al-rihlah*) to authenticate even one single *hadith*.[299] As narrated by 'Ata' b. Abi Rabah (d. 115 AH), a jurist from among the followers, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (d. 674 CE) travelled to Egypt, where 'Uqbah b. 'Amir (d. 677 or 678 CE) was living, to investigate the original of a *hadith*. Immediately after verifying its authenticity, he says 'this was the reason why I came here' and returned home. Gülen emphasises that, although Abu Ayyub al-Ansari already knew very well that the *hadith* affirms: 'Whosoever covers (the sins of) a Muslim, Allah covers (his-her sins) on the Day of Judgment,'[300] he wanted to remove doubts and verify its authenticity with 'Uqbah b. 'Amir who was the only companion who had heard the *hadith* directly from the Prophet. This was the only *hadith* Abu Ayyub al-Ansari knew—and he knew it well—however 'Uqbah b. 'Amir was the only living companion, in his town, who had heard it directly from the Prophet; he travelled to confirm its soundness.[301] Gülen usually handles issues broadly, bringing detailed accounts of events from the time of the companions and their followers to support his views.

This is a method Gülen often employs to persuade his readers. Gülen persistently makes use of historical literature to place emphasis on the importance of and precision in the collection of *hadith*. By doing so, he confirms and strengthens his own ideas with similar ones put forward in history while allowing the reader to watch the enlivening of past cases in today's society. According to documented sources, it is

[299] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 455, 456.
[300] Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 4/153, 159; Humaydi, *al-Musnad*, 1/189.
[301] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 455. There are also other related anecdotes which are mentioned by Gülen. He presents this event, reported by Bukhari, as evidence to support his views: Jabir b. 'Abd Allah, from among *ansar* (helpers), takes on a journey of one whole month to hear a *hadith* directly from its narrator, 'Abd Allah ibn Unays.[301] Saying, 'I come to know that you narrated a *hadith*, which I did not hear directly from the Prophet. I come to you because of the fear of one of us could die before I hear it from you,' he receives the *hadith* from 'Abd Allah ibn Unays and returns to Medina. (Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, III.495; Bukhari, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 337, Hakim, *al-Mustadraq*, II.475).

known that scholars from among the followers also traced the companions' path, and practised *al-rihlah* to investigate with other companions a *hadith* they come across. Abu al-'Aliyah, from among the followers, says that wherever—be it in Basrah, Baghdad, Khorasan or Tranxonia—they hear something from the companions, they would not confine themselves to only one companion, and would travel to Mecca and Medina to confirm it through other companions,[302] and only then would feel confident about the health of that *hadith.*[303] *Al-rihlah* has been practised under challenging conditions and in all times as a general principle for reaching the truth in the discipline of *hadith,* and has been instrumental in producing sound results and development of sciences. This point, which is often mentioned with confidence in Islamic literature, has been confirmed and taken its place in historical documents.

Another essential principle in *hadith* literature is the justice characteristic of narrators (*'adl*). Some of the important factors that can injure or destroy this attribute are: narrator's loss of memory and witnessing them utter a lie, even it is only once in their life. Gülen accepts this method as an important criterion in transmitting *hadith* and deals with it in a bright style in his works. This is a narrative style he adds to the subject.

Gülen explains that liars are well pursued and identified, and no *hadith* would ever be accepted from one who was detected lying, even only once in their life, or from one who made a mistake. Furthermore, no *hadith* would be reported from someone who has fallen into suspicion, even if they were once considered a *thiqah* narrator.[304] Gülen is concerned that even the smallest deviation from the centre would evolve into a more serious aberration as it moves toward the periphery. Gülen asserts

[302] Darimi, *Muqaddimah*, 47; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqât al-Kubra*, 7/113; Hatîb al-Baghdadi, *al-Rihlah fi Talab al-Hadith*, s.93; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhid*, 1/56.
[303] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 457.
[304] ibid. 462, 463.

that mistakes on narratives have been thoroughly taken care of since the time of the companions, and any minor fault in a narrator was considered a reason for the rejection of the *hadith* they reported. In case of *hadith* being supported by another *hadith*, the particular narrator was excluded from the chain of transmission. Gülen illustrates this view through an example from Abu Da'wud: Ibn Abi Lahi'ah (d. 709 CE), whose name has been frequently mentioned in the *sunan*, used to narrate from his books and not from his memory. However, he lost his trustworthiness in *hadith* narration after his books were lost. For this reason, receiving narrations from him were linked to strict criteria. For example, Imam Bukhari accepted and recorded from him only narrations supported by other reports and legal rulings.[305] What is understood from Gülen's approach is the narrator's safeguarding of his qualifications for *hadith* transmission comes before his private personality. According to him, sensitivities and disciplines need to be put in place properly. He argues that leading figures in *hadith* discipline, such as Amir b. Sharahil al-Sha'bi (d. 721 CE), Ibn Sirin (d. 728 CE), Qatadah ibn Di'amah (d. 736 CE), Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri (d. 742 CE), , Sufyan al-Sawri (d. 778 CE), 'Ibrahim ibn Yazid al-Nakha'i (d. 96 AH), Hisham al-Dastawa'i (d. 154 AH) and Mith'ar ibn Qudam (nd), acted like morality police in the pursuit of liars. He also maintains that these personalities used to closely follow those infected with ethnic, religious and ideological bigotry for their possible lies and ask, 'Who did you hear this *hadith* from?'[306]

These examples given by Gülen clearly demonstrate he is a faithful follower of early Islamic scholars in the discipline of *hadith*. The reason for his selection of *hadith*, especially from the time of the companions, when defending his views indicates his enthusiasm to emphasise *hadith* literature reaching our time without

[305] ibid. 463.
[306] ibid. 459.

interruption and corruption. In this way, he also highlights the efficacy of the established criteria in *hadith* discipline. It is important to pay attention to the two aspects of Gülen giving *hadith* examples directly from the companions—one regarding the *sunnah* and the other regarding the companions. With regard to safeguarding *sunnah*, Gülen brings to the forefront the companions of the Prophet, and explains with anecdotes their endeavours and determination in this regard. In other words, he secures the safety of *hadith* and elevates the institution of *sunnah* on their shoulders while protecting the integrity of the companions in relation to *hadith* and *sunnah*. In Islamic literature, there are many traditions reported from the Prophet elevating the value and status of the companions.[307] They are presented by the Prophet, in terms of social values, as a community to be emulated[308] and imitated. The great love and respect Gülen harbours for the Prophet and his companions is clearly manifested here.

Gülen's methodology in terms of *hadith* and biographies is not only pragmatic but also logical in the sense of directing his interlocutor to deep philosophical thinking. He presents a chunk of historical events with a series of illustrative examples and anecdotes, highlights the necessity of pondering on and reconsidering these events, and demonstrates this, saying, 'an accumulation [of knowledge] verified and represented by tens of thousands of great scholars in every period of time.'[309] While propelling his students to read and contemplate, he argues that the course of history in the sphere of the development of sciences must be dealt with using common sense and fairness.

[307] 'The people of my generation are the best, then those who follow them, and then those who follow the latter...' (Bukhari, *Shahadat*, 9; Muslim, *Fadhail al-Sahabah*, 214).
[308] "My Companions are like the stars, whomever of them you follow, you shall be guided." (*Faidh al-Qadir*, 4,76; *Jami' al-Bayan al-Ilm*, 2/91),
[309] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2 (The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p,173-175

In conclusion, the examples and anecdotes given by Gülen demonstrate that he shares the same views as very well-established Islamic scholarship with regard to the discipline of *hadith*. He presents strong and logical evidence about the fundamentals and historical development of this branch of science. He bases his views on common sense, and cautiously approaches issues that may be incorrect. He minutely and carefully investigates the views that he presents to his interlocutors as a thesis. He exercises extra care to ensure that no void exists in his theses nor gap in logic.

On the face of his available literature, Gülen could be criticised that his approach to the discipline of *hadith* does not fully meet academic standards. It is true that Gülen's approach is far from being purely academic, and such a criticism may appear to be legitimate at first glance. However, considering Gülen's mission as the leader of a global movement, and having not written a specific work on the subject, any such argument becomes irrelevant. Besides, his close involvement in *hadith* literature is not driven by academic interest, but rather his adoption of *sunnah* as a lifestyle. Although he admires and trusts the works produced by early Islamic scholars, Gülen's adherence to their path can hardly be seen as blind following. He critically studies and verifies any *hadith* before using it.

Recording, ascertaining and compilation of *sunnah*

Gülen's thoughts

In Islamic literature, learning and recording *hadith* in writing or by committing to memory by the companions during the time of the Prophet is expressed by the terms *dabt* and *tathbit* (recording and writing of *hadiths*). According to Muslim scholars, this process was carried out under the watchful eyes of the Prophet.[310] Being rigorously studied and critically examined, the soundness of this process was proven by Muslim scholars according to established criteria in *hadith* discipline. However,

[310] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 100–1001.

this did very little in terms of preventing *hadith* collections subsequently becoming the subject of continuous debate.

According to Gülen, the Qur'anic verse, 'Indeed it is We, We Who send down the Reminder in parts, and it is indeed We Who are its Guardian,'[311] represents objective evidence to preserve the Qur'an in various means and ways. [312] In his book entitled *Sonsuz Nur*, Gülen uses this verse as the main theme for the introduction to the ascertaining of *sunnah*. Immediately, he puts forward a thesis arguing that the *sunnah*—like the Qur'an—has been recorded, memorised, safeguarded and transmitted to the present time without changing or alteration.[313] In commenting on this verse, Gülen explains that God's protection also extends to *sunnah*, and further elaborates that the companions of the Prophet exercised the same sensitivity and care in the recording and safeguarding of *sunnah* as they did for the Qur'an.[314] Likewise, in drawing attention to Gülen's thoroughness on *sunnah*, Canan shares Gülen's thoughts regarding this issue and argues that God's protection of the Qur'an also encompasses *sunnah*.[315]

In a way, Gülen's interpretation of the verse attempts to make it a responsibility for Muslims to strive to protect *sunnah*. Gülen argues that, although God sent down the Qur'an and will protect it from corruption, Muslims should not fall

[311] Qur'an 15:9.
[312] In *The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English*, Ali Ünal states this verse means: 'The text of the Qur'an was preserved in four different ways during the lifetime of the Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings:

- The Prophet, had the whole text of the Divine Messages, from the beginning to the end, committed to writing by the scribes of Revelations.
- Many of the Companions learned the whole text of the Qur'an, every syllable, by heart.
- All the illustrious Companions, without exception, had memorized at least some portions of the Holy Qur'an, for the simple reason that it was obligatory for them to recite it during worship.
- A considerable number of the literate Companions kept a private record of the text of the Qur'an and satisfied themselves as to the purity of their record by reading it out to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.'

[313] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2.(The Messenger of God: Muhammad*) p, 415.
[314] ibid.
[315] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 85.

into the error of exempting themselves from responsibility and leave everything to the care of God's will.[316] If divine decrees are sent down through a causal agency—i.e. the Messenger of God—to His servants to practise and adopt them as a way of life, there is nothing unusual about expecting mankind to be responsible for preserving them similarly by means of causal processes. This responsibility also extends to safeguarding the Prophet's commentaries and interpretations of Qur'anic verses as well as his personal *sunnah*. In a way, besides taking up material responsibility to establish and protect the religion, the above verse recommends undertaking scholarly responsibilities to uphold its fundamental principles and sustain its integrity. It is quite reasonable to say from the cause-effect point of view that making these inferences from Gülen's thoughts is possible. In other words, while offering religious arguments for *sunnah* being under protection, Gülen rationalises these arguments and puts the issue into a more plausible framework. This approach is not very common among other Muslim scholars.

Taking into account this verse and related commentaries, it is not too difficult to understand the sensitivity of the companions, their followers and Muslim scholars that followed them. According to Gülen—like the majority of Muslim scholars—*sunnah* was vigorously discussed among the companions and written in 'book' form, and these booklets were handed from generation to generation.[317]

Gülen's way of assertion has an underlying methodology to support his views with evidence drawn firstly from the Qur'an and then from *sunnah*. Qur'anic verses decreeing obedience to the Prophet constitute the main basis for this approach of which verses has already been mentioned and quoted. According to him, in his perspective it would be beneficial to focus on the companions' care regarding the

[316] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2. (The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* p, 546.
[317] *Zamanın Altın Dilimi,(The Golden Realm of Time)Çağ Ve Nesil-4* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 184, 186.

emulation of Prophet's example (*sunnah).* Further, proper understanding of the companions' prudence and attention reveals the reasons behind their trend and adoption of *sunnah*. Therefore, this verse must be carefully analysed and evaluated from the points of view of cause, occasion and objective. Looking from this perspective, the verse clearly enjoins conformity and obedience to all messages delivered by the Prophet as an obligation (*wajib*). This also means refraining from all acts and deeds the Prophet prohibited—directly by Qur'anic verses or by his own views, commentaries or interpretations there from.[318] By emphasising the Islamic concept of *taqwa* ('piety' , 'God consciousness' or 'fear of God'), the clause *wa at-taqu Allah* ('keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety') in the verse draws attention to the significance of *sunnah* and encourages its treatment with utmost care and sensitivity.[319] This is how the companions interpreted the last phrase of the verse, assuming responsibility to guard and preserve *sunnah* together with the Qur'an. Gülen believes, due to the elucidatory and guiding position of the companions, that piety can be achieved by upholding and adhering to the prophetic traditions.[320]

Gülen elucidates that the verse, 'Assuredly you have in God's Messenger an excellent example to follow for whoever looks forward to God and the Last Day, and remembers and mentions God much,'[321] determines a different task and objective for the companions. The verse, as they understand it, tells them it is only through strict adherence to *sunnah* that true faith and just religious rulings can be achieved. The verse also indicates that objective and subjective problems can be solved and eschatological topics, such as *barzakh* (interval between death and resurrection), *mahshar* (resurrection), *hisab* (judgment), *shafa'ah* (intercession), *jannah* (paradise),

[318] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 419.
[319] ibid. 418.
[320] ibid. 419.
[321] Qur'an 33:21.

jahannam (hell), elucidated through the help of *sunnah*. This is because the Qur'an and *sunnah* were offering the companions, within their socio-cultural environment, a new and original world view and a belief in the afterlife. Hence, they were following the Prophet's footsteps, memorising, recording, practising and transmitting all his actions, words, hand signs and facial expressions like smiles and embitterment.[322] Setting his focus on these above verses, Gülen concludes that the companions assumed upholding *sunnah* as their duty. Needless to say, his inference coincides exactly with the majority of *sunni* scholars' views. Although Gülen prefers to expound his views with the help of rational arguments, the fact that his approach to issues—within the framework of Qur'anic verses—draws a confessional and pastoral picture should not be overlooked.

Gülen supports his arguments through examples and evidence selected from within the *sunnah* alongside evidence drawn from verses of the Qur'an. Thus, he stresses that he holds his argument because it is supported with *sunnah*, which he believes is sound and healthy. Gülen also views *hadith* as evidence supporting that the companions had been encouraged by the Prophet to safeguard and transmit *sunnah*.[323] Gülen regards the Prophet's instruction to the delegation of 'Abd al-Qays from Rabi'ah tribe, 'Be mindful of these directives and inform those whom you have left behind, about them,'[324] as another encouragement for the learning and spreading of *sunnah*. Similarly, the Prophet's instruction, '...and those who are present here should convey this to those who are absent,'[325] at the end of the Farewell Sermon—a speech that highlights important points in Islamic law—is viewed by Gülen as another piece of strong evidence for recording and conveying *sunnah*.[326] Gülen's citation of this

[322] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 419–420.
[323] ibid., 420.
[324] Bukhârî, *faith*, 40; Muslim, *faith*, 24.
[325] Bukhârî, *ilm*, 9, 10, 37; Muslim, *hac*, 446; *qasâmah*, 29.
[326] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*. *(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* p, 420–421.

evidence throughout his works brings the study and practical application of *sunnah* to the fore, and at the same time, shows his preferred method of establishing facts is based and relies on records and resources.

Gülen brings divergent interpretations of the Qur'an's and *sunnah*'s persistent encouragement of the companions for retaining and recording the prophetic traditions. A case in point is that the companions' eagerness in recording and reporting *sunnah*, as Gülen explains, was driven by their concern and fear that their lack of action would cause the truth to become hidden and concealed from other people. Likewise, Gülen inferred this interpretation from another tradition of the Prophet: 'He who is asked something he knows and conceals it will have a bridle of fire put on him on the Day of Resurrection.'[327] Gülen explains that the companions well understood this *hadith*, and were mindful of the responsibility it placed on them.[328]

In light of above evidence drawn directly from the Qur'an and *sunnah*, Gülen asserts that the *sunnah* has been ascertained as a result of a long, incessant and meticulous process, based on rigorous criteria and transmitted from generation to generation with utmost care.

In continuation of his furnishing of evidence, Gülen explains that the Prophet made the companions memorise certain verses and supplications, which they discussed among themselves. With this example, Gülen draws attention to the role of the Prophet in the process of establishing *sunnah*; thus, inferring that the companions could not remain exempt of this endeavour, as it was personally led by the Prophet.

[327] Tirmidhi, *ilm*, 3; Abû Dâvûd, *ilm*, 9.
[328] He also expounds that the following verse was considered by the companions as evidence of their duty to safeguard and communicate *sunnah*: "Those who conceal the truths and commandments in the Book that God has sent down, and sell them for a trifling price (such as worldly benefit, status and renown), they eat nothing but fire in their bellies. And God will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection (when they will be in dire need to speak to Him, to implore forgiveness and mercy), nor will He absolve them to pronounce them pure. For them is a painful punishment" Qur`an 2:174
Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 421.

Gülen illustrates his thoughts with various examples, including one is that was reported by Ibn Mas'ud (d. 32 AH) '[The Prophet] used to teach us the *tashahhud* (supplication recited in sitting position during the prayer) the way he taught us the Qur'an.'[329] Similarly, Gülen presents the *hadith*, 'He [the Prophet] used to teach us the *istikharah* (seeking guidance from Allah) in all matters as he would teach us a *surah* of the Qur'an,'[330] as an evidence to strengthen his case.[331]

Obviously, the mutual discussion method constitutes an important factor of the Prophet's teaching system. The Prophet employed this method during his time and strongly advised its usage. Dating back to the time of the Prophet, Gülen highlights this method and its reliability, especially in establishing and collecting *hadith*, and emphasises that the Prophet encouraged his companions to study and mutually discuss everything he taught them.[332] Interestingly enough, by citing numerous individual anecdotes, Gülen implies that if one takes them as a whole, it becomes apparent that there is a collective effort to preserve the *sunnah.* At this juncture, Gülen draws attention to this *hadith*:

> No people gather together in one of the Houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves [*tadarasa*], except that *sakinah* (tranquillity) descends upon them, and mercy envelops them, and the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them amongst those who are with Him.[333]

Semantically speaking, the word *tadarasa* in the *hadith* has been used in the sense of 'mutual discussion' (in the text, rendered 'studying it among themselves'), and refers to mutual sharing of knowledge, its confirmation, yielding correct inferences, and drawing sound and rational conclusions. The companions checked and controlled the degree of soundness of many *hadith* using this method; if they encountered any

[329] Bukhârî, *isti'dhan*, 28; Muslim, *salât*, 59.
[330] Bukhârî, *tahajjud*, 25; Tirmidhi, *vitr*, 18; Abû Dâvûd, *vitr*, 31.
[331] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*. *(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* p, 422.
[332] ibid.
[333] Muslim, *dhikr*, 38; Tirmidhî, *qırâât*, 10; Abû Dâvûd, *vitr*, 14.

problems, they asked the Prophet for clarification. As can be seen from the above examples, to support his views, Gülen exerts himself to derive evidence not only from the general meaning of *hadith*, but also by performing linguistic analysis of keywords within the texts (*matn*).

The discussion up to this point demonstrates that Gülen has convinced himself concerning the reliability of the recording and reporting of *sunnah*. The predominant theme throughout his works is the concern of how to convince others within the context of *naqli* (by transmission) as well as *'aqli* (by inference) evidence. This is the reason why he endeavours to derive various implications from almost every transmission he deals with to justify the soundness of *sunnah*. The *hadith* reported by Anas b. Malik, 'We used to sit with the Prophet and hear something from him, and when we left his presence, we used to remember and discuss it among ourselves,'[334] is a good examples of how *sunnah* was established through mutual discussions.[335] Having originated from *hadith*, this method is known to be widely used by Muslim scholars to deal with subjects related to the compilation and soundness of *sunnah* during later periods.

Noting the companions' aspiration to learn and teach *hadith*, Gülen highlights the effect of the exhortation stemming from the *sunnah*. In other words, making his expertise in the discipline of *sirah* (biographies) conducive to new perspectives in the transmission of *hadith*, Gülen draws attention to the companions' individual and communal state of mind, and attempts to do some psychological analyses—an endeavour rarely seen among other scholars. He prefers to support his argument by emphasising the *ashab al-suffah*'s (people of the bench) almost ceaseless efforts to study the Qur'an and *sunnah*. He also notes the presence of teachers (*mudarris*)

[334] Hatîb al-Baghdâdî, a*l-jâmi' li akhlâki'r-râwî wa âdâbi's-sâmi'*, 1/363-364.
[335] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 423.

teaching *hadith* periodically to up to 70 companions. Taking into consideration the high number of female companions' participation in this teaching campaign, the time of the Prophet emerges as a period of intense *hadith* teaching. At this juncture, Gülen points to the fact that female companions were also taking lessons from the Prophet on certain days of the week, and by asking questions directly to him, receiving guidance on issues specific to women. This meant religious ruling concerning issues related to women were also memorised and recorded. Likewise, details of the Prophet's private family life were reported and explained by his wives.[336] It is of benefit to note that Muslims are very convinced that the companions, who knew of life before the advent of Islam, were willing to receive whatever the Prophet taught them. Needless to say, the Prophet's teaching put human beings in the forefront and—with the establishment and spread of *sunnah*, which is an important source of code of conduct—satisfied a huge social need. Moreover, continuation of this educational drive after *Hijrah* (migration) was conducive to the increase in literacy during the Medina period.

The events the companions experienced with the Prophet were discussed during these classes and confirmed by the Prophet. Gülen presents certain examples to illustrate these events, such as the death of 'Uthman b. Maz'un (d. 3rd year AH),[337] the announcement of Quzman position—a companion who was killed during the Battle of 'Uhud,[338] the declaration of certain companions who were killed on the Day of Khaybar as martyrs,[339] Dimam b. Tha'labah's acceptance of Islam,[340] and 'Ubay b. Ka'b's (d. 643 CE)[341] heralding by *surah al-Bayyinah*.[342] Gülen explains that the

[336] ibid., 423–424.
[337] Bukhârî, *Janaiz*, 3, *manâqıbu'l-ansâr*, 46; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad* ,1/237, 6/436.
[338] Bukhârî, *jihad*, 182; Muslim, *faith*, 178.
[339] Muslim, *faith*, 182; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, a*l-Musnad*, 1/30, 47.
[340] Bukhârî, *ilm*, 6; Nesâî, *sıyâm*, 1.
[341] Bukhârî, *tafsir*, (98) 1–3; Muslim, *fadâilu's-sahaba*, 121–122.
[342] Qur`an, 98.

companions witnessed, discussed, recorded and communicated these happenings.[343] Indeed, these are historically accurate occurrences witnessed by a great number of companions. Gülen deems the silence or admission by the witnessing companions as substantiation of these historical events. He emphasises that these events were confirmed at the time of happening and communicated to others without any lies or interpolation. Through these examples, Gülen uses the historical environment to justify the authenticity of *sunnah*. Clearly Gülen uses every single anecdote and opportunity to build a solid foundation for his views by rationalising the question. On the other hand, in the thinking process of Islam, it is a fact that *'aqli* evidence is also based on *naqli* evidence. That is, disregarding neither of them, Gülen employs both *'aql* (intellect) and *naql* (what is transmitted, i.e. the Qur'an and *sunnah*) by putting them into each other's service.

Drawing on *tabaqat* literature (biographical literature) from time to time, Gülen articulates several arguments in order to illustrate the companions' yearning desire for learning and safeguarding *sunnah*. For example, he explains there were about 40[344] scribes around the Prophet,[345] and there was a serious endeavour among the companions to learn how to read and write to be able to better study and understand the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Gülen argues it is because of this reason that the Prophet fostered literacy learning. One of the articles in the peace agreement signed after the Battle of Badr stipulated a ransom for the liberation of each prisoner of war to teach 10 Muslims how to read and write.[346] Gülen uses this condition to justify his argument. Moreover, Gülen views this incentive and yearning desire across the community as a declaration of an educational campaign aiming to learn, record and safeguard *sunnah*. There was something in front of the companions they never

[343] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 425–428.
[344] ibid. 509.
[345] M. Accâc al-Khatîb, a*s-Sunnatu qabla't-tadvîn*, 298.
[346] İbn Sa'd, a*t-Tabaqâtu'l-kubrâ*, 2/22.

experienced before—an original phenomenon that was called *sunnah*. This was another factor motivating or even forcing them to memorise and write this newly found source of guidance.[347] Thus, *sunnah* was set for overall official codification.[348] Through the above explanations, Gülen infers that the codification of *sunnah* began at the time of the Prophet, although the official process started during the time of Umayyad Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz (d. 720 CE), and the compilation was modelled on the works of the companions.

Although recording *sunnah* in writing for its safekeeping—like the Qur'an—was a major task undertaken by the companions, this also sparked intense debate in *hadith* discipline due to an open to interpretation 'writing ban' on *hadith*.[349] This particular *hadith* constituted the basis for diverse interpretations during later periods and still does in our time.[350]

Starting from this point, Canan argues that the prohibition of writing anything other than the Qur'an was a temporary ban, and imposed during the early days of the Medina period. To support his views, he refers his readers to Khatib al-Baghdadi's *Taqyidu al-ilm*, a work that brings together all narrations related to the permission of recording *hadith* in writing.[351] Here, the following questions may come to mind: If the writing ban was imposed during the Medina period, what is the status of traditions that were committed to writing during the 13 years of the Mecca period? Were there any *hadith* recorded and safeguarded during that time? If this was the case, what was the method employed? An important point should be highlighted is that the Mecca

[347] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 430.
[348] ibid., 509–510.
[349] Muslim, *Sahih-i Muslim Kitab Dhuhd*; Hanbal, *Musnad*, 3/12, 21, 33.
[350] Basing their arguments on this hadith, some researchers concluded that prophetic traditions were not written during the time of the Prophet and the *sunnah* was established in later periods, thus are not authentic. Paradoxically, critics of *sunnah* base their views on this particular source, which is 'untrustworthy' in their own terms. Raşit Küçük highlighted this contradiction by directing this question to one of his opponents: 'Don't you think presenting an unreliable tradition to justify your argument is itself self-contradictory?'Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 102, 103.
[351] ibid., 103.

period become notable for the memorisation of revealed verses of the Qur'an and they were also recorded in writing by scribes. At this juncture, Gülen emphasises the qualities of the companions, and argues they were by nature very intelligent and had strong memories; once they committed a Qur'anic verse or *hadith* to memory, they would never forget it again.[352] The companions' endeavours to memorise traditions and their question as to the permission for writing[353] them during the Medina period indicates that the memorisation method prevailed during the Mecca period. After all, there were only 17 companions[354] who could read and write during the Mecca period, and most of them were appointed as revelation scribes—busy writing down Qur'anic verses as they were revealed. However, unlettered companions from within the inner circle of the Prophet chose to memorise traditions alongside Qur'anic verses—the importance of memorisation in Arab literature was mentioned in this paper. As for the Medina period, it emerges as a transitional period from memorisation to the written method thanks to the increase in the companions' educational level. In one aspect, this period can be seen as the verification of memorisation qualities by pen and writing. The companions asked the Prophet if writing down *hadith* was allowed while they memorise them; 'Seek help from your hand' he replied.[355]

Looking into Gülen's comments on the prohibition of writing down *hadith* reveals that he focuses on the rationale behind this ban. Gülen asserts that the narration, 'We asked the Prophet if we could write down *hadith*s but he did not give his permission,'[356] which is widely used as evidence for the prohibition of writing down traditions, is not considered authentic by scholars specialised in the field of

[352] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 431.
[353] Tirmidhî, *ilm*, 12; Tabarânî, *al-Mu'jamu'l-avsat*, 3/169.
[354]M. Hanefi Palabıyık, "Cahiliye Dönemi ve Islam'ın ilk Yıllarında Okuma-Yazma Faaliyetleri " *The Journal of Atatürk University, Theology Faculty,volume; 27*, (2007). p,32-33
[355] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 513.
[356] Muslim, *dhuhd*, 72; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 3/12, 21; Dârimî, *muqaddimah* ,42.

hadith. Hence, Gülen emphasises it does not constitute sound evidence for the writing ban.[357]

Again, he puts his focus on the rationale of the ban, which is based on prophetic tradition. He observes that the rationale behind the prohibition is a concern that *hadith* recorded on the same writing material with the Qur'an would be mingled with the words of God.[358] The Prophet's apprehension may be stemming from his concern about preserving the authenticity of the Qur'an. Gülen explains that 'Umar also exhibited the same sensitivity on this issue with similar fervour. This was during the early stages of the revelation and the word of God needed to be learned, understood and its practical functionality properly grasped. Over time the companions become accustomed to the distinct style of the revelation, and developed similar sensitivity and meticulousness for its preservation, so the prohibition on writing down the *hadith* was revoked by the Prophet. After they developed the aptitude to differentiate between the Qur'an and *hadith*, the companions were allowed to write down *sunnah* in the same way they wrote verses of the Qur'an.[359] Gülen puts forward the view suggesting the ban on writing was subsequently abrogated.[360] As above evaluation shows clearly that Gülen follows general remarks of Muslim traditions in his interpretation of this report.

The narration of writing down with hands draws attention to two factors—memorisation and writing—in establishing and recording *hadith*. While encouraging his companions to safeguard *sunnah*, the Prophet also teaches them the methods to be employed in this discipline. The inference Gülen draws from this tradition is the view

[357] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 511.
[358] ibid. 511–512.
[359] ibid. 511–512–519.
[360] ibid. 519.

that writing verifies what is committed to memory. He backs up[361] this view with further evidence drawn from a narration where Rafi' b. Khadij (d. 63 AH) asked the Prophet if they could write things they hear from him. The Prophet said: 'Write. There is no harm in it.'[362] To provide yet further support for his argument, Gülen draws attention to certain matters mentioned in Imam Darimi's (d. 181 AH) and Ibn Hajar's (d. 852 AH) books. According to these two famous scholars, the Prophet reduced to writing certain legal rulings with regard to *qisas* (*lex talionis*), *diyyah* (blood money) and *sha'a'ir al-Islamiyah* (Islamic symbols, customs), and sent them to 'Amr b. Hazm, the governor of Yemen at that time.[363] Also, the Prophet wrote an agreement for Wa'il b. Hujr (narrator of hadith, companion).[364] As can be seen from the above outline, Gülen selects his sources of reference very carefully, and—due to the sensitivity of the issue—tries to explain the matter as clearly as he can. Presenting a multiplicity of examples further strengthens his argument.

There is another narration that holds an interesting place on the issue of writing down *hadith*s where the Prophet, on his sick-bed, asked for a pen and paper, allegedly to write or dictate something for his community,[365] a request that could not be met. Some Muslim scholars comment that whatever the Prophet wanted to say remained hidden. However, Gülen has a rather different comment on this tradition, which holds a special place in his mind:

> It is true that something that which the Prophet had wanted to be written remained hidden, but what is fundamental is the fact that his traditions were written down during his time, and furthermore, he himself dictated or wanted something to be recorded in writing.[366]

[361] ibid., 513.
[362] Hatîb al-Baghdâdî, *Takyîdu'l-Ilm*, s.73. See different narrations: Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 2/215; Haysamî, *Macmau'-dhavâid*, 1/151.
[363] Dârimî, *diyât*, 1,3,11,12; Ibn Hacar, *al-İsâba*, 6/228; Ibn Hishâm, *as-Sîratu'n-nabaviyyah*, 5/294.
[364] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 514.
[365] Bukhârî, *Ilm*, 39, *Mardâ*, 17; Muslim, *Vasiyat*, 22.
[366] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 515.

The request of writing by the Prophet suggests that keeping written records was a routine part of the culture. Therefore, the Prophet did not ask from his companions something to which they were not accustomed; he, in fact, confirmed and justified a method they had been using for quite some time. With this interpretation, Gülen exhibits a different approach and method of critical analysis of the prophetic traditions. His critical approach and comments based on sound rational arguments, through which he draws inferences related to the fundamentals of *sunnah*, can be explained most logically by his persistent focus on ascertaining and compilation of *hadith* collections. Thus, he draws attention to certain points overlooked in the past.

The first compilers of Prophetic tradition in the Islamic community.

After the process of memorisation and writing down of *hadith* as mentioned above, there was another important process that took place in the history of Islam. This is the stage during which vigorous efforts were exerted to compile the prophetic traditions.

At this point, Gülen brings forth examples of the companions such as 'Umar (d. 644 CE), Ibn 'Abbas (d. 688 CE), Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (d. 662 or 672 CE), Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (d. 693 CE) and Zayd b. Sabit (d. 660 CE), and those like Sha'bi and Nakha'i (d. 682 CE) from among the successors—whom he considers geniuses of memory—who were advocates of memorisation and verbal transmission of *hadith*. By bringing these great *hadith* scholars into the agenda by highlighting the strength of their memory, Gülen calls attention to an intellectual 'checks and balances' mechanism that scrutinises *hadith* transmission. It is important to remember that these scholars had initially positioned themselves against writing for reasons already mentioned.[367]

[367] ibid. 520.

According to Gülen, *tadwin* is a term representing a state of being in an unending brainstorm, intellectual fertility, and researching and structuring basic principles to understand the past, control the present and formulate the future.[368] That is to say, *tadwin* is one of the ways to reach new interpretations and legal rulings by preserving the fundamental principles and original data. According to Gülen, *tadwin* is a process that began in the early period when the companions memorised and recorded the prophetic traditions, and still continues today.[369]

However, Gülen stresses that *tadwin* as an official state project was initiated by Umayyad Caliph 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d.720 AH),[370] whom he considers[371] the first *mujaddid* (reviver of the religion)[372] in Islam.[373] Ibn al-Shihab al-Zuhri was commissioned by 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 720 CE) to collect and compile the prophetic traditions. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar's *mawla* (emancipated slave) and Imam Malik's teacher Nafi'—who was also Layth ibn Sa'd's *shaykh*—and Layth ibn Sa'd also collected traditions.[374] The official *tadwin* works initiated by 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz were continued by the efforts of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Jurayj (d. 767 CE) in Mecca, Sa'id ibn Abi 'Arubah (d. 157 AH) in Iraq, Awza'i (d. 774 CE) in Damascus, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman (nd) in Medina, Za'idah b. Qudamah (d. 161 AH) and Sufyan al- Thawri (d. 778 CE) in Kufah, Hammad ibn. Salamah (d. 783 CE) in Basrah, and Abdullah b. Mubarak (d. 797 CE) in Khorasan.[375] Gülen explains that these *hadith* scholars, as a result of their meticulous works, left behind for future

[368] *Gurbet Ufukları,(Horizons of Foreign Land) Kırık Testi-3* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 185, 186.
[369] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*. *(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* p, 516–517.
[370] Gülen, *Gurbet Ufukları, (Horizons of Foreign Land) Kırık Testi-3*.p, 191.
[371] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*. *(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)* p, 520.
[372] 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz developed the idea of bringing back a Muhammadan spirit to governments that have lost their original Islamic ruling.' Gülen, *Gurbet Ufukları, Kırık Testi-3*.p, 191.
[373] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 519–520.
[374] *Yol Mülahazaları,(Contemplating the Journey) Prizma 6* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2007).p, 188–189.
[375] Ibn Hajar, *Hadyu's-Sârî*, s.4; M. Ajjâc al-Khatîb, *as-Sunna qabla't-tadvîn*, 337.

generations valuable materials comparable to large libraries.[376] It is understood that knowledge centres were established in most cities during this period, and compilation processes were supervised by committees composed of expert scholars in *hadith* discipline. With this elucidation and examples, Gülen displays an endeavour to convince his interlocutors that there were solid supervisory mechanisms overseeing the compilation processes. He argues that the huge task of the *tadwin* process, which extends back to the time of the Prophet, stands in front of us as a momentous historical event. Considering the distances between the abovementioned cities and transport facilities available at the time,[377] Gülen's persistence in arguing about the size and importance of the works undertaken is well-understood.

If one may say, there is a considerably long time between 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's caliphate and the time of the Prophet, how was this long period of time filled in Gülen's view? How was the *sunnah* safeguarded during this long period of time? At this juncture, Gülen puts forth certain views. Basing his argument on evidence derived from *hadith*, he asserts that *sunnah* was protected individually by *hadith* scholars until the caliphate of 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz. He derives this conclusion from the Prophet's saying:

> A group of people from my *ummah* will always remain triumphant on the right path and continue to be triumphant (against their opponents) [They will protect the religion; the religion will never be completely eradicated from the face of Earth]. He who deserts them shall not be able to do them any harm. They will remain in this position until Allah's Command is executed (i.e. *qiyamah* is established).[378]

Explaining this *hadith*, Gülen stresses that, all along its history, there has been no shortage of helpers for the religion and Islam has been protected with all its fundamentals since its inception. According to Muslim scholars, the meaning 'help' is

[376] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 521.
[377] *Fatiha Üzerine Mülahazalar (Reflections on the Qur'an)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011)., 33.
[378] Bukhârî, *i'tisam*, 10; *tavhid*, 29; Muslim, *imâra*, 170.

inferred from the word *jama'ah* ('community', translated 'a group of people' in the text) in the *hadith*. In Bukhari's view, 'these are the people of Sham (Damascus),'[379] which was a centre of Islamic sciences during that time. Scholars like Awza'i, Al-Layth ibn Sa'd (d. 791 CE) and Imam Malik used to send their outstanding students to Damascus to further their studies. According to some scholars, the word *jama'ah* in the *hadith* refers to scholars of *hadith*, while others argue it denotes exegetes. However, Gülen's interpretation is somewhat free from time restrictions. He argues that Bukhari's interpretation stems from his consideration of Damascus as a centre of science. Whether this is true, Gülen views this comment as restricting prophetic foresight to a time and locality, and stresses that the heralded protection of the religion, as foretold in the narration, is effective until the Day of Judgment. In his view, this *jama'ah* fulfilled its duties in Damascus and served under 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz at another time.[380] Viewing the word *jama'ah* from this perspective, Gülen derives duties—i.e. contributing to the preservation of the religion—from this narration for our time and future generations. What we see is that in Gülen's epistemology, besides the Qur'an and *sunnah*, the consensus of the community plays significant role in transmitting and producing knowledge. At first glance his above mentioned approach to issue looks like a theological reading of the text but in reality it is socio-political reading of the report. By this way, he concludes that early Muslims took active part in preservation of the *sunnah.*

In Gülen's opinion, 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz derived duty from endeavours undertaken up until his caliphate and, assuming the preservation of the *sunnah* as a state responsibility, he made a governmental decision to start compilation works officially for the first time. Scholars of *hadith* and jurists were officially employed for

[379] Bukhârî, *tavhid*, 29.
[380] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 487.

tadwin during his caliphate.[381] 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz and his policies and practices have been mentioned abundantly in Gülen's works and often used as illustrating examples. 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's decision to assume the preservation of traditions as a state responsibility provided the highest level of protection for *sunnah*. This policy also demonstrates that besides independent individual efforts, supporting religious scholarship is a state responsibility. Due to some political upheavals during his time, 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz made great efforts to return *sunnah* to practical life[382] in a more functional manner.[383] Gülen brings in a different perspective to this period of compilation and describes it as a 'renaissance in Islam' (what he really means here is vivification or revitalisation of Islam), as he highlights intense intellectual activities taking place during that time. However, Gülen expresses his disappointment in the failure to maintain in later years the acceleration achieved during this period. He lays the blame on Muslims for this failure and reminds them again and again of their responsibility in the fields of *sunnah* and other Islamic sciences.[384] Gülen views, correctly, the highest status attributed to *sunnah* during 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's caliphate as a precursor to massive social melioration and restructuring.[385] Comparing that period to the present time, Gülen believes that eroded social values can be restored by adopting the principles of *sunnah*.[386]

From the onset we note that non-Muslim scholars became critical and sceptic about the prophetic traditions, practices and sayings of Prophet Muhammad. Any student of Islam and religion thus deems it crucial and significant to assess and evaluate the views, perspectives and feelings of those who do not consider themselves

[381] *Gurbet Ufukları, (Horizons of Foreign Land) Kırık Testi-3*.p, 192.
[382] ibid., 191.
[383] It could be said that Gülen's approach to practicing *sunnah* has been influenced by 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz.
[384] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kırık Testi-1* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 140.
[385] *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler -2* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 256–260.
[386] *Enginliği Ile Bizim Dünyamız, İktisadi Mülahazalar(Our World in Depth, Economic Contemplations*) (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 142–144.

Muslims. More simply put, any reader or researcher can identify with the difference of opinions and criticism of Islamic principles, fundamentals and terms and terminology.

However, from a Muslim perspective, the research endeavours to balance out the arguments, perspectives and approach by also presenting arguments for and against whilst elucidating and presenting the Muslim of point. This is offered here in the approach and views Gülen holds and expresses.

*Sunnah'*s function according to Gülen

In Chapter one detailed analyses were made on the status and function of *sunnah* in Islam, and certain Muslim scholars' and researchers' views were examined. In this section, I will evaluate Gülen's views. Answers will be sought to questions regarding the function Gülen attributes to the *sunnah* in comparison to his contemporaries, the way he brings it to current times, the way he practices it in his daily life and his final objective. An attempt will be made to clarify these issues through selected passages from his works.

In the section related to the *sunnah*'s function in his work *Sonsuz Nur-2(Infinitiy life)*, Gülen confirms and fortifies the *ahl al-sunnah* (Sunni Muslims) view on the function of the *sunnah*. He emphasises the invalidity of claims like 'The Qur'an is the only source in Islam. The *sunnah* has no mission like interpreting the Qur'an, imposing legal provisions and explaining social problems.'[387] As understood, besides being a religious source of reference, Gülen asserts that the *sunnah* provides solutions to problems at an individual, familial and social level. He also suggests it fosters scientific research and innovation, throwing light on and preparing ground for medicinal development, chemistry and other scientific realities of the present day.

[387] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 97.

Pointing to the role of scientific realities in subserving the fundamentals of religious truths, Gülen focuses on the thesis that scientific facts do not differ from the facts described in the Qur'an and *sunnah*.[388] He thus attributes a scientific mission to the *sunnah*. He defends and proves the guiding status of the *sunnah* against those who generate opposing views. It is sufficient to give a single example here: prophetic traditions foretold that 20 people will share one pomegranate and eat to their fill, resting under the shade of its tree[389]; this draws a path for the agricultural sector in the future. Gülen comments that 'by the advance in genetic technology, or by other ways or means unknown for the time being, it may be possible to produce plants and fruits of the size described in the *hadith*.'[390] He reinforces his comment by highlighting the hormone and gene technologies that are progressing quickly nowadays. Be that as it may, it is safe to assume that Gülen is also under the influence of modern science and scientific approaches to the religious texts. Nevertheless, he is not obsessed with science and does not attempt in excessive scientific interpretation.

Legislative aspect of *sunnah*

While dealing with *sunnah'*s function, Gülen does not confine himself to the standard statements by just saying that *sunnah* is the second fundamental legal source after the Qur'an. He prefers to elaborate on *sunnah*'s finer details, its involvement in other Islamic sciences, and verdicts that are not expressly mentioned in the Qur'an.[391] Looking from this perspective, Gülen intends to prove that the *sunnah* has many profound and elaborate aspects and functions.

A careful study of the thought structure that Gülen exposes in his works reveals that he invites his interlocutors to analysis and synthesis rather than superficial

[388] Heyet, *Sağduyu Çağrısı*, ed. Osman Bakar, Fethullah Gülen'in Din Ve Bilim Yorumu: Din Blimsel Yaklaşım (Istanbul: Işık Publishing, 2005).
[389] Muslim, *Fitan*, 110.
[390] Gülen, *Fikir Atlası,(The Atlas of Ideas)Fasıldan Fasıla* p,148.149.
[391] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 382–383.

thinking, and channels them to elaborate thinking. In other words, he advises them to pay attention to the tradition's deep and implied meanings—from which legal deductions can be made—as well as their literal and clear meanings. Gülen's dealing with *sunnah* in this way unveils his students' analytical abilities. According to Gülen, if studied in detail and interpreted within the context of the current era, *sunnah* can be constituted as an independent source of reference. When dealing with differing views among Muslim scholars on the possibility of the Qur'an and *sunnah* being independent sources of reference, Faruk Beşer draws attention to Gülen's views and comments on this issue. Reflecting on the generality of the views and comments expressed in Gülen's works, Beşer asserts that Gülen tacitly views *sunnah* as an independent source of reference.[392] Looking from Gülen's perspective, the *sunnah* is not only an independent source of reference, but also, like the Qur'an, a legal source that declares certain things lawful and others unlawful, and sets rules and principles with regards to *al-ahkam al-Islamiyyah*. It also has a function in clarifying what is ambiguous in the Qur'an, explaining what is implicit, specifying what is general and limiting what is unconditional.[393] Clearly, Gülen is following classical path of Muslim scholarship in his approach to the legal function of *sunnah*.

If Gülen is read in the context of the legal, social and scientific functions he ascribes to the *sunnah*, his overall approach can be better understood. Evaluating him from this perspective helps in accepting that his conclusions and interpretations on *sunnah* are correct. For example, when he says that *sunnah* makes certain things unlawful,[394] he elaborates this view and presents his comment on the basis of a solid example. He asserts that the Qur'an does not mention certain matters directly or

[392] Faruk Beşer, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendinin Fıkhını Anlamak*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitap Publishing, 2006).p, 37.
[393] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 383.
[394] With such acceptance and ideologies, Gülen shows that he indeed walks parallel to many of the scholars of *sunnah*.

indirectly, and bestows the legislative authority to the Prophet. Such matters are abundant where the Qur'an remains silent. Prohibition of eating from the flesh of domesticated donkeys[395] or predatory animals;[396] or marriage with paternal or maternal aunts are some of the examples of issues the Qur'an does not deal with clearly. However, the *sunnah* puts provisions and renders them *haram* (unlawful).[397] Gülen asserts that the *sunnah* acts independently in implementing provisions concerning these issues. This approach and the examples he chooses are the same as Sunni Muslims scholars' understanding in classical period. In other words, by not putting forth a different view, Gülen highlights the accuracy of the *salaf* in their views. Thus, Gülen draws evidence there from to support his view that the companions who kept these points in mind viewed the *sunnah* as a source of legislation and safeguarded it with a similar sensitivity to the Qur'an.[398]

In fact, the Prophet's approach in exercising such a power is perfectly in line with the Qur'anic context and he derives his authority from the Qur'an.[399] The Qur'anic verse, 'They ask you (O Messenger) what is lawful for them (including, in particular, the game caught by trained hunting animals…)'[400] is considered the source of this authority. Through this verse, God justifies the legitimacy of the Prophet's rulings. Supposing he erred in his verdicts, the Prophet—who is constantly supported with Divine guidance or revelation—would certainly be warned and his verdicts abrogated. A close study of Islamic literature shows no trace of any Prophetic ruling

[395] Bukhârî, *fardu'l-humus*, 20; Muslim, *sayd*, 26.
[396] Bukhârî, *niqah*, 27; Muslim, *niqah*, 33–40.
[397] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.(*The Messenger of God: Muhammad*) p, 383.
[398] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 383–384.
[399] "They follow the (most illustrious) Messenger, the Prophet who neither reads nor writes (and has, therefore, remained preserved from any traces of the existing written culture and is free from any intellectual and spiritual pollution), whom they find described (with all his distinguishing features) in the Torah and the Gospel (that are) with them. He enjoins upon them what is right and good, and forbids them what is evil; he makes pure, wholesome things lawful for them, and bad, corrupt things unlawful. And he relieves them of their burdens (remaining of their own Law) and the restraints that were upon them." (Qur'an 7:157)
[400] Qur'an 5:4

being repealed. Furthermore, verses in the Qur'an commanding[401] obedience[402] to the Prophet are well known among Islamic scholars. These particular verses clearly bestow power upon the Prophet to legislate rules.

Gülen's approach is parallel with the majority of Muslim scholars. However, pondering within the context of the *hadith*, 'Allah shall raise for this *ummah* at the head of every century a man who shall renew (or revive) His religion,'[403] Gülen displays a different approach. Quoting from Wahil, he says the Prophet has left behind a clear footprint that can easily be followed, i.e. his *sunnah*.[404] Thus Gülen—being a follower of this footprint—believes that solutions to new jurisprudential issues the Muslim community may encounter in present times must be sought along the axis of *sunnah*. To facilitate this task, as mentioned earlier, he suggests the establishment of a scholarly consultative council (*shura*) that functions within the sphere of *sunnah.*[405] Thus, he stresses that the *sunnah* lights the way for progress and solving problems of contemporary time. He also argues that innovations (*bid'ah*) and superstitions (*batil*) that crept into the community (*'ummah*) can be purged by way of adherence to the *sunnah*.[406] He describes the characteristics of the representatives of such a mission as 'being able to analyse and synthesise signs [of God] both *afaqi* (pertaining to the physical world; objective) and *anfusi* (pertaining to the inner self; subjective)…'[407]

Sunnah's interpretations of the Qur'an

Evaluating Gülen's views from above-mentioned perspective shows he directs his focus on the two main functions of *sunnah*. Firstly, *sunnah* defines certain lawful

[401] Qur'an 3:31; 4:65, 80; 5:92; 24:54; 59:7.
[402] "O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority; and if you are to dispute among yourselves about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if indeed you believe in God and the Last Day. This is the best (for you), and fairest in the end." (Qur'an 4:59).
[403] Abu Dawud, *Malahim*, 1
[404] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 65.
[405] *Fasıldan Fasıla 4(From Chapter to Chapter)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 167.
[406] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.217.
[407] M. Fethullah Gülen, *İrşad Ekseni(The Ideal Human)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 125–126

and unlawful deeds not mentioned in the Qur'an; secondly, it interprets the Qur'an.[408] According to Muslim exegetes, the Prophet appears to have literally interpreted only a limited number of Qur'anic verses.[409] However, it is important to study the Prophet's daily life—which was a living Qur'an in practice—rather than a few *hadith* that literally interpreted the Qur'an. His behaviour was nothing else than the manifestation of the Qur'anic value system in practical life. Therefore, interpretation of the Qur'an by *sunnah* should not be confined to a limited number of *hadith* mentioned in the *kitab al-tafsir* (book of interpretation) section of *hadith* collections.[410] At this juncture, Gülen also persistently emphasises in his works that this point should be analysed carefully.

Albayrak draws attention to the importance given by Gülen to the functions of *hadith* from several aspects. According to him, Gülen employs *hadith* in interpreting Qur'anic verses, delivering important messages, for *irshad* (guidance) purpose, and in explaining and elaborating on keywords mentioned in Qur'anic verses.[411] Thus, Gülen uses *sunnah* as a source of reference in almost all subjects, with which he substantiates his views and theories. Hence, he appears to be determined to explain *sunnah*'s role to his audiences.

After these explanations, illustrating with some examples is important for better understanding of the subject. Gülen explains that the companions asked the Prophet directly when there was something they could not understand in a verse, and as soon as the Prophet answered and the issue was clarified, they put it into practice. Gülen supports his view with examples from the *sunnah*. For example (as given in the

[408] Albayrak, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Tefsir Anlayışı*.p, 80.
[409] See for details M. Akif Koç, *İsnad Verileri Cerçevesinde Erken Donem Tefsir Faaliyetleri: Ibn Ebi Hâtim (d.327/939) Tefsiri Orneğinde bir Literatür Denemesi*, Ankara: Kitabiyat Y. 2003.
[410] Albayrak, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Tefsir Anlayışı*.p, 80.
[411] ibid. 80–81

part of interpreting the Qur'an by prophetic tradition), God mentioned '*zulm*' in the Qur`an[412] and the Prophet explained the meaning of the *zulm*. Gülen most appropriately gives this explanation: 'If the word *zulm* was not explained by the Prophet as *shirk*, the true intent of the verse would not be understood.'[413] Therefore, these misinterpretations would cause confusion and damage to Muslims' creed, and even lead to heresy; proper understanding and practising of Islam could face most serious difficulties. Evidently, this would be inconsistent with the Qur'an's delivery and guidance rationale. Gülen continues and says 'thanks to the companions' question, the *sunnah* stepped in at a critical stage, clarified the true objective of the verse and prevented Muslims from construing unnecessary misconceptions.

At this point, this question may come to mind: 'Why does Gülen concentrate on the same examples, knowing that majority of the Muslim scholars used similar examples and achieved the same results?' By concentrating on these illustrations, Gülen demonstrates he shares the same views with early period Muslim scholars. Simply by directing attention once again towards the time of the Prophet, he highlights the authenticity of the source and soundness of its chains of transmission. He explains the *sunnah* like a multi-lane motorway, keeping in mind that *sunnah* offers solutions to problems of all ages as it did during the early period of Islam. In other words, as the problems encountered during the early stage of Islam revisit the present day populace—although in different versions— they undoubtedly will resurface again in the future. Gülen focuses on the universality of the *sunnah* and its aspect that encompasses all ages. Thus, he refutes answers to arguments like '*sunnah* has accomplished its mission during a set period; it has no functionality today.' To put it in another way, Gülen attempts to put forward a different understanding of *sunnah*

[412] Qur'an, 6:82.
[413] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 406.

with examples manifesting from his own life. Keeping links between periods sound and strong, he is trying to establish a healthy chain of transmission from the early period to the present day, and from here to the future. He takes assessments of the early period, compares them with the present day values and demonstrates similarities in between.

Gülen presents *hadith* according to subjects mentioned in Qur'anic verses or their relevance to the message he would like to deliver. Often using this method, he puts forth new comments about *sunnah*. In other words, this is a presentation of *hadith* by Gülen in an extraneous mode.[414] For example, in explaining the phrase '[God] will assign for them love', which is mentioned in the following verse, he points out the love and grace of God:

> Assuredly, those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, the All-Merciful will assign for them love (in the hearts of the inhabitants of the heaven and many on the earth, so that they will receive welcome throughout creation, no matter if they are weak and small in number now).[415]

For this reason, he interprets this verse with the help of a *hadith*: 'when God loves someone, He calls Gabriel, "I love so-and-so. So love him too." And Gabriel announces this amongst the inhabitants of the heavens and earth…'[416]

Gülen's explanation of the above verse in light of this *hadith* has been mentioned in the past by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149-1210), Ibn Kathir (1301-1373), Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). This demonstrates that Gülen's approach coincides with these famous exegetical works. With this interpretation Gülen stresses that those Muslims who put themselves into the service of others will be granted Divine appreciation.[417] In a way, elaborating on the meaning of the verse in the light of the

[414] Albayrak, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Tefsir Anlayışı*.p, 81.
[415] Qur'an 19:96.
[416] Bukhari, *bad al-halq*, 6; *adab*, 41; *tawhid*, 33; Muslim, *birr*, 157; Tirmidhi, *tafsir* (19), 6
[417] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kur'andan İdrake Yansıyanlar(Reflections on the Quran)*(Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2009).p, 269.

hadith, Gülen gives messages to the current generation. Further, the encouragement he gives to the members of the movement under his leadership should not be overlooked.

By presenting *hadith* in an extraneous mode, Gülen handpicks the *hadith* relevant to the messages he wants to give. As explained before, this demonstrates his preference for practical Prophetic traditions. Gülen is convinced that faith that is not applied in practical life cannot be strong enough. This is perfectly consistent with the essence of the *sunnah*. While Qur'an draws the theoretical structure, the *sunnah* applies it into daily life. The Qur'an is a set of Divine rules sent down to regulate worldly life, whereby the canonical injunctions are lived to the full in a practical sense. Therefore, if the Qur'an is a corpus of guidance and laws for nations and communities, it must be reflected in their practical life. The way and method to realise this can only be found in the Prophet's *sunnah*.

Gülen chooses another Qur'anic verse to substantiate his views. To illustrate, he uses the following verse as an example:

> (The hypocrites have deceived them) just like Satan, when he says to human, "Disbelieve (in God)!" Then when he disbelieves, he says (to human): "Surely I am quit of you, for surely I fear God, the Lord of the worlds!"[418]

Gülen points out Satan's fear of God despite his rebellion and rebellious nature. Gülen brings an explanation from the *sunnah* to caution believers against slipping out and falling at a critical point as mentioned in this verse: 'Woe unto me, the son of Adam was commanded to prostrate, and he prostrated and Paradise was entitled to him and I was commanded to prostrate, but I refused and am doomed to Hell.'[419] As understood from this verse and *hadith*, human beings are ontologically susceptible to rebellion, and due to this weakness, can find themselves on the verge of losing their faith at any time. Starting from this point, Gülen points to a correlation between the rebellion

[418] Qur'an 59:16.
[419] Muslim, *faith*, 133; Ibn Maja, *iqama*, 70; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, a*l-Musnad*, 2/443.

mentioned in the verse and the commandment of prostration mentioned in the *hadith*.[420] With this comment, he draws attention to the truth that prostration acts as breaks against denial that comes from a lack of faith. Thus deeds build immunity to sins by filling in any doors to denial and act as conductors.

Sunnah explains ambiguities in the revelation

Besides these approaches, Gülen points out a different function of *sunnah*. According to him, *sunnah* clarifies what is ambiguous in the Qur'an. This view represent a function of *sunnah* that is generally accepted by Muslim scholars. That is, Gülen shares the same view with the majority of Muslim scholars without adding a diverse annotation. There are various ambiguous expressions without explicit details in the Qur'an concerning the obligatory daily prayers, which is one of the most important pillars of Islam. For example, the following Qur'anic verses refer to the obligation of prayer: '..And establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions...'[421] These and many other verses in the Holy Qur'an has a bearing on the continuing nature of prayers in its appropriate times.

However, the time and details of the prayers are not explained.[422] Gülen stresses that, even if the times of the prayers were established, the other important acts of the prayer, such as *fard* (obligatory), *wajib* (necessary), *mustahab* (recommended, but not necessary), *makruh* (undesirable, abominable), *mufsid* (any act that spoils a worship that started properly), *ruku'* (bowing), *sujud* (prostration), *qira'ah* (recitation of Quran), *tahiyyah* (supplication) and *salam* (to end the prayer), could not be known unless the Prophet explained them. The interpreter and clarifier of this ambiguous Divine command '...And establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions...'[423] is the *sunnah*. Furthermore, to teach them how to pray correctly, the Prophet said to his

[420] Gülen, *Kur'andan İdrake Yansıyanlar*.p, 402–403.
[421] Qur'an 33:33.
[422] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 406–407.
[423] Qur'an 33:33.

companions, 'Pray as you see me praying.'[424] Based on this, Gülen asserts that the Qur'an and *sunnah* act like factors to intrinsically complement each other.[425] If the Qur'an had to deal with all disciplines in detail, it would be bloated to such a gigantic size that its study would be far beyond human power, causing serious difficulties in understanding and practising the Divine commandments. Hence, the Qur'an might have not been understood and found itself in a position outside the sphere of practical life. This is the reason why the Qur'an deals only with the essence of matters, and leaves the details and practical aspects to the *sunnah,* although it supports adherence to it by various verses.

While the situation is as such with prayer, it is not much different with *hajj* (pilgrimage), which is another pillar of Islam. According to Gülen, it is the *sunnah* that explains the details of the rituals of pilgrimage. The Prophet explained in practice during his Farewell Hajj in more detail than what is described in the Qur'an.[426] The rites of pilgrimage are established by the *hadith*, 'Learn your rituals [of hajj] from me..'[427] and, again, all the details are explained by *sunnah.*[428] Analysing the Farewell Hajj which was the only *hajj* performed by the Prophet—in this way would be more plausible.

Sunnah specifically delimits verses

Another function of the *sunnah*—besides clarifying the ambiguous verses—is to particularise or specify certain Qur'anic verdicts. Certain issues of the laws of inheritance in Islam have been stipulated by Qur'an but further enhanced and elucidated by the Prophetic utterances and more detailed explanations of the prophet.

[424] Bukhârî, *adhan,* 18; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 5/53.
[425] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 407–408.
[426] 'The Hajj is in the months well-known. Whoever undertakes the duty of Hajj in them, there is no sensual indulgence, nor wicked conduct, nor disputing during the Hajj...' (Qur'an 2:197)
[427] Nasâî, *manasiq,* 220; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 3/318, 366.
[428] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 408–409.

According to Gülen, the scope of some verses encompasses everybody including the Prophet. However, he interprets a particular issue here in light of evidence he derives from the *sunnah*. After the death of the Prophet, his daughter Fatimah approaches Caliph Abu Bakr to collect her inheritance from her father. Upon this, Abu Bakr narrates a *hadith* he heard directly from the Prophet: 'We prophets do not leave inheritance, whatever we leave is for charity.'[429] According to Gülen, this *hadith* limited the generality of the above verse.

In a way, Gülen holds *sunnah* as an important legislator in the Islamic legal system concerning overall public safety and welfare. Through these kinds of examples, he highlights the *sunnah*'s various aspects looking towards nurturing individuals, families and societies. He endeavours to strengthen cordial relationships, eradicate enmity and safeguard the social structure by creating a solid bond of respect and love between individuals, families and the wider society. Thus, he assigns a much lower priority to disputes over material expectations. Furthermore, to hold this bond together and ward off disintegration, he reminds people of the Qur'anic and prophetic verdicts that debar from inheritance. Gülen, in a way, assumes the role of a social engineer. By playing a functional role in certain Qur'anic verses, *sunnah* imposes conditions on the application of their verdicts.

Sunnah sets conditions for verses' injunctions

According to Gülen, for example, the following verse stipulates general rules and principles of commerce:

> O you who believe! Do not consume one another's wealth in wrongful ways (such as theft, extortion, bribery, usury, and gambling), except it be dealing by mutual agreement; and do not destroy yourselves (individually or collectively by following wrongful ways like extreme asceticism and idleness. Be ever

[429] Bukhârî, *i'tisâm*, 5, *humus*, 1; Muslim, *jihad*, 49-52; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 2/463.

> mindful that) God has surely been All-Compassionate toward you (particularly as believers).[430]

However, the Prophet imposed some conditions to the agreement mentioned in the verse by this principle: 'Do not sell fruits of dates till they are in good condition.'[431] According to Gülen's approach, the Qur'anic verses impose a verdict in general terms without much detail. However, the Prophet attached conditions to agreements in order to protect both the buyer and the seller in the produce market. Gülen illustrates this through examples. A wholesale price agreement can be made on the basis of an estimated amount of produce while trees are at blossoming time. However, this agreement holds risks as well as opportunities of excessive profit for both parties. Due to natural disasters, trees may be affected while blossoming and may not yield the expected produce. Thus, the buyer loses. Conversely, due to favourable climatic or other conditions, the orchard may yield more produce than estimated. In this case, the seller loses from the wholesale value of their produce although they reap more than their labour's worth. In such situations, the *sunnah* comes into action and regulates commercial transactions, that is, establishes trade principles to protect both parties. Hence, it helps commercial ethics to be established in the society. The verdict here is used by means of *qiyas* (analogy) instrument in Islamic literature, as a legal source for other areas of trade and commerce. Looking from the perspective of these explanations, the Prophet followed a rational and progressive path with a delicate balance to educate the populace of the Time of Ignorance. Following the Prophet's footsteps, Gülen uses a delicate method to explain things repeatedly from various perspectives (*tasrif* method) and according to the academic and intellectual level of his audience.

[430] Qur'an 4:29.
[431] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 410.

The *sunnah* in Gülen's system of thought is an Islamic source that holds a position to impose legislation on issues where the Qur'an is silent, as a principle source of reference in jurisprudence and as an authority to interpret and explain Qur'anic verses. Gülen's approach complies with Beşer's definition of *sunnah* being an independent source. Also, according to Gülen, *sunnah* began to fulfil its function with the beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an and has always been in close correlation with it. As the two complement each other, they constitute the two fundamental sources of Islam.[432] The four major schools of thought (*madhhab*)[433] in Islam have no difference of opinion about the Qur'an and *sunnah* being the two fundamental sources.[434] Thus, *sunnah* has been regarded together with the Qur'an since the beginning. Because of this close relationship, neither *sunnah* nor the Qur'an can be isolated from the other.[435] Despite certain rationalistic thought trends that emerged in almost every age since the beginning, *sunnah* holds its position as a source for the religion and religious life, a basis for scholarly and scientific research, and offers seminal presentations to scholarly and scientific researchers. Looking into Gülen's works in its entirety shows he seems to have the same considerations.

However, another significant point should be mentioned here is that the *hadiths* and *sunnah* has interpreted the tradition of the Prophet. According to Gülen, when the companions applied the *sunnah* into practice incorrectly due to their misunderstanding; the Prophet explained the misunderstood point with another *hadith*. For example, a companion, who is called Nuayman, sometimes had drank alcohol and the Messenger would apply the provision of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) to him. This act was a sin. For this reason, when one of the companions condemned him, the Messenger of

[432] ibid. 411.
[433] *Hanafite, Shafi'ite, Malikite, Hanbalite*.
[434] Ahmet Kurucan, *Fıkıf Dünyamız (Our World of Islamic Jurisprudence)* (Istanbul: Işık Publishing, 2011).p,35.
[435] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 383.

God frowned and said:[436] "Do not help the satan against your brother. I swear to God he loves God and His Messenger."[437] The Prophet has explained the situation of an individual being classified wrong due to his faults in the society, with a second *hadith*. In this way, he points out on an important rule which establishes peace in the society.

Gülen's knowledge in the field of *sunnah*

The levels of Gülen's knowledge and competency in the field of *sunnah* constitute an important issue in terms of the correctness of his legal decisions and comments. As *sunnah* is one of the main sources of reference for legal and practical rulings, proficiency in this area is the first prerequisite of Muslim scholars. *Sunnah* offering solutions to modern day problems is possible by means of competent scholars. For this reason, according to Gülen in Islamic literature, upholding and safeguarding the religion in this century has been guaranteed by this *hadith*, 'Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years the one who will renovate[438] its religion for it.'[439] In accordance with this *hadith*, there existed a *mujaddid*[440]—whose scholarly knowledge and competence is confirmed by their contemporaries—in every century to renovate the religion. The message of this *hadith* also infers that scholars with deep knowledge (*mujaddid*)[441] will emerge to preserve and revive the religion—today and in the future. At the same time, the *hadith* imposes the responsibility of cultivating competent scholars on the Muslim community. Otherwise, the likelihood of occurrence of a gap in the preservation of the Qur'an and

[436] M. Fethullah Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-1* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p,302-303
[437] Bukhari, *hudûd* 4-5.
[438] According to the Islamic creed, there will come no more prophets after Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the responsibility of protecting the religion against innovations, teaching Muslims their religion and finding solutions to modern problems rests with Muslim scholars. Competent Muslim scholars who assume these responsibilities are called *mujaddid*.
[439] Abu Da'wud, *Malahim*, 1.
[440] According to Muslim scholars, the first century's *mujaddid* was 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz, and Imam Shafi'i for the second century; and Abu al-Hasan al Ash'ari, Abu Hamid al Isfirani, and Imam al-Ghazzali for the following two centuries. ('*Awn al-Ma'bud* 4/181. *Kashf al-Khafa'*, 1/243)
[441] According to Islamic literature, the most prominent characteristic of a *mujaddid* is the possession of deep knowledge and competency in the disciplines of Qur'an, *sunnah* and other Islamic sciences.

sunnah would be very high. Therefore, the safeguarding of the religion is directly proportional to the efforts of Muslim community, although God assumes the responsibility to protect the Qur'an.[442] Despite some serious failures and degeneracies that occurred in the history of Islam, the Muslim world has the potential to fill any void related to the Qur'an and *sunnah* and to sustain its stamina.

At this juncture, some relevant questions come to mind about Gülen. Can Gülen—who is a public figure internationally—be directly associated with the term *mujaddid*; does he possess the required level of knowledge in *sunnah* and related disciplines? Whether Gülen qualifies as a *mujaddid* does not have a direct relation to this subject. However, the prerequisite to qualify for the title of *mujaddid* (renovator), i.e. proficiency in the fields of Qur'an and *sunnah*, coincides with the possibility of Gülen's possession of knowledge. Looking from this perspective necessitates dealing briefly with the subject of *mujaddid*.

Faruk Beşer, who expounds on the qualities of *mujtahid* (Islamic thinker/reformer), gives Gülen a special position among present day Muslim scholars. He focuses on his scholarly qualities and considers him a *mujtahid*.[443] Beşer emphasises that his view is not binding on anyone. However, looking from the point of view of a *mujtahid*'s qualities and knowledge in *sunnah*, Beşer—despite the possibility of being mistaken in considering him a *mujtahid* opens a door for researchers that may lead to further studying Gülen's expertise in the discipline of *sunnah*. Beşer examined Gülen's level of knowledge using scientific criteria and proved his scholarly proficiency. Whereas, what does Gülen think about Beşer's assertion and how he positions himself? Does he accept or reject these kinds of views about his stature? As mentioned earlier, the subject matter is not whether Gülen is

[442] Qur'an 15:9.
[443] Beşer, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendinin Fıkhını Anlamak*.p, 18.

qualified for the title of *mujaddid*, but rather his level of knowledge on and adherence to the Prophetic tradition. In other words, the question is about whether Gülen is accepted to be an authority in the field of *sunnah*.

Despite his respect for individuals and diversity of views, Gülen displays the well-known characteristic of defending the *sunnah* at any cost as perceived in Islam. However, he does not hesitate to make necessary corrections when he himself is the subject matter . He believes in freedom of speech and asserts that researchers have the right to express the results of their intellectual activities without any restrictions; he does not see himself in a position to make any editorial interference. While expressing views about *mujaddid*, Gülen asserts that construing the new concepts of the era, laws of the nature, new conditions and social formations, and filling the voids in areas open to independent reasoning according to the rules of *ijtihad* [444] is the duty of the *mujaddid*. Gülen does not consider himself as possessing the required qualifications in this field, as he says, 'I neither considered myself a *mujaddid* to fill that position nor a *mujtahid*.'[445] He emphatically advises that all possible solutions to new problems should be discovered and necessary legal rulings issued by a council of scholars who are experts in respective Islamic sciences and other related areas, instead of the view of single *mujtahid*. This reflects the importance he attributes to this issue. The safeguarding of the religion in its pristine form would be directly proportional to the expertise of the scholars constituting this council. It is possible to infer from Gülen's view that the position of *mujtahid* in this age should be held by a juridical personality rather than a real person. However, with the non-existence of such a

[444] Reasoning carried out by a Muslim, based on his knowledge of the Qur`an and teaching of the Prophet in a matter not specified by either.
[445] Fethullah Gülen, "Ne Müceddidim ne Müctehid ne de Reformist" (March, 2006), http://fgulen.com/tr/fethullah-gulenin-butun-eserleri/terbiye-ve-cihad/175-fgulen-com-turkce/hitabet/bamteli-cozumleri/9849-Fethullah-Gulen-Ne-Muceddidim-Ne-Muctehid-Ne-de-Reformist

council and important issues needing to be solved, Gülen does not hesitate to make a choice from among existing opinions or exercise his own power of *ijtihad*.[446]

According to Beşer's view, Gülen appears to be in a contradictory position vis-à-vis his own words. That is, while highlighting the necessity of a council of experts on one hand, on the other hand, he, individually, focuses on legal issues. In this situation, Gülen's issuing of legal rulings on certain issues may be considered the result of the non-existence of such a council and accomplished expert scholars. Also, these legal decisions reluctantly issued by Gülen may be motivated by his concern for the Muslim community's needs that must be satisfied, and the possibility that ignoring these needs would leave religious principles and values exposed to risks of erosion and deviation. This provides evidence of scholarly courage and expertise in *sunnah* and other sources of reference when issuing legal decisions. Needless to say, issuing a legal decision requires proper understanding of all Qur'anic verses, *hadith* and other accumulated Islamic literature related to the subject matter. In a way, it is possible to say that Gülen acts on the principle that aiming to fill a legal void is essential to ward off social handicaps—even though there may be a chance of erring in his decision. By this action, he draws attention to the golden rule of easing the practice of the religion instead of complicating it, as recommended by the Prophet, and presents rational and practical principles.

Islam, being a living and dynamic religion, will dictate the establishment of mechanisms for the issuing of legal opinions. As there were Muslim scholars serving the religion in the past, there will always be a need for equally qualified scholars who can read well the spirit of the time and assume a leadership position in the

[446] Beşer, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendinin Fıkhını Anlamak*.p, 43.

community. Beşer's approaches to *mujaddid* and *mujtahid*[447]—although not accepted by Gülen—appear to be welcomed by others, because there exists no thesis put forth to counter Beşer's thesis or any other arguments as rebuttal to his views. This may be seen as the acknowledgement of his high level of knowledge in the discipline of *hadith*, thus recognition of the correctness of new legal decisions he issued. This acceptance, as mentioned above, may also be interpreted as viewing him as a member of an incorporeal (or incorporated) entity.

Assessing in light of the above explanations, it is possible to say that Gülen may be viewed as fitting well with Beşer's definition of *mujaddid* and *mujtahid*, especially in the field of Islamic sciences, and particularly in the discipline of *hadith*. Because Gülen is well-known and recognised for his studies of *sunnah* and various *hadith* collections together with other Islamic sciences, and his research on the biographies of the Prophet and his companions.[448] As mentioned earlier, he explains this in his own words, 'I spent my whole life in investigating the *sunnah*.'[449] What is understood from this statement is that Gülen puts *sunnah* in the centre of all Islamic disciplines and looks into all other sciences from this perspective. He views *sunnah* as a primary source of reference in analysing and justifying other sciences. In addition, his understanding of *sunnah* is not historical or instrumental but deeply theological.

According to Suat Yıldırım,[450] the source of Gülen's scholarly career consists of the Qur'an and *sunnah*. In his research and writings, Gülen gives unique illustrations from the lives of the companions, who represent dynamic manifestations of the *sunnah*. In Gülen's narratives, analyses and new interpretations of these

[447] A legist formulating independent decision in legal or theological matters, based on interpretation and application of the main principles of derivation of Islamic law.
[448] Erdoğan, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi, Küçük Dünyam*.p, 45.
[449] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* ,p, 307.
[450] Yıldırım is colleague who worked with Gulen in the Religious Affairs Department (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) (first met in 1964).

examples—although some date back almost 50 years—the source does not appear to have lost any vigour at all. Those who follow Gülen closely, and those who know him from his writings and speeches, can see the exceptional level of his knowledge—based on many hundreds of scholarly sources of reference—on *sunnah* and the time of the Prophet.[451] Here may come to mind the question of why Gülen mostly derives his proofs and evidence from the companions, whom he estimates highly. The reason is that the companions witnessed the most pristine form of the religion during the time of the Prophet; they were directly targeted by the Qur'an and were personal representatives of the Qur'anic verses. Thus, they became role models as they adopted Islam as their way of life. At this juncture, Gülen presents the Prophet's sayings, 'Be cautious about my companions, and do not say anything inappropriate to them!' and 'My companions are like stars in the sky, whichever of them you use as a guide, you will be rightly guided.'[452] It may be appropriate to say that Gülen attributes more importance to knowledge on *sunnah* because of these *hadith*. Thus, he selects his examples from this source.

Thomas Michel questions Gülen's interpretations of Islamic sources, and seeks answers to the question of how much is known about his commentaries. Michel concludes that, in his interpretations of Islamic sources, Gülen takes the Qur'an and moral values as his fundamental basis. According to him, Gülen places the necessity of worship, and moral and personal virtues at the centre of religious motives and emotions. He explains the true Islam as excellent morality. This is to say, this approach of his views the Prophetic tradition as the spring of morality, and places the *sunnah* in its centre. Michel highlights Gülen's frequent usage of *hadith* as a source of

[451] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* p, 17.
[452] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.(*The Messenger of God: Muhammad*) p, 359.

reference and strengthening for his views.[453] He illustrates this with the following *hadith* as an example, which Gülen uses in elaborating on this topic: 'Islam is all about good moral values. I have been sent only to complete the good morality.'[454]

Furthermore, Faruk Tuncer, who carried out research on Gülen, emphasises that Gülen is a prominent *hadith* critic, who can evaluate a *hadith* from the point of view of its narrator and chain of narration as well as the text. In fact, Gülen is well known for his substantial volume of acquis in *hadith* literature.[455] It is for this reason that Gülen uses examples he carefully selects from the body of *sunnah*. Here, it is necessary to draw attention to a particular characteristic of Gülen's. He is known to be a person who does not assert himself. He explains this approach by saying, 'Persistence or declaring one's views forcefully is a kind of impertinency, presumptuousness; hypocrisy and boasting.'[456] However, when it comes to issues concerning the Prophetic traditions, i.e. whether something is part of the *sunnah*, he always gives clear and assertive responses and argues strongly.[457] This may be judged as stemming from his serious stance and sensitivity in terms of avoiding ambiguity in matters concerning the *sunnah*. When *sunnah* is concerned, Gülen defends his thesis with definite information, and endeavours to prove it by detailed evidence. This aspect of him constitutes evidence for his confidence in the discipline of *sunnah* and his accumulated experience in this field.

Canan, however, says the discipline of *hadith* involves classifications based on certain criteria. According to this arrangement, *hadith* scholars are categorised in line

[453] Thomas Michel, "Gulen as Educator and Religious Teacher ", Article, (April 2002), http://fgulen.com/en/press/review/24902-gulen-as-educator-and-religious-teacher
[454] Jalaluddin as-Suyuti, *al Jamius Sagir*, 1/79.
[455] Tuncer, "Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı".
[456] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Ümit Burcu,(The Bearing of Hope)Kırık Testi-4* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 57.
[457] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 75.

with their level of *hadith* knowledge, such as *talib*[458] (knowledge seeker), *muhaddith*[459] (*hadith* scholar), *hafidh*[460] (one who guards or memorised), *hujjah*[461] (proof) and *haqim*[462] (wise one).[463] In accordance with these definitions, Canan points that Gülen has a very good command of *hadith* literature. He emphasises that Gülen presents proofs and evidence from *sunnah* to support the subjects he discusses when needed. He points out Gülen's attention to the authenticity of traditions, textual variations between narrations reported through different chains of transmissions and conditions of the transmitters.[464] However, despite these conclusions, Canan declines to include Gülen into any of the above categories. He appears to be unwilling to provide a clear judgement and confine Gülen's position in the field of *hadith*, and leaves the verdict to experts in the area. However, his ability of bringing evidence—whenever needed—from *hadith* collections together with their state of health, source and textual variations, presenting information about their transmitters and, on some issues, saying definitely, 'This issue does not exist in the body of *sunnah*; that matter does not exist in the *sunnah*,'[465] constitute a reasonably solid basis for one to think that he may be a *hujjah*.

Whilst commenting on the recording of revelations and *sunnah* which attracts criticism from outsiders, Gülen always establishes a comparison between the process of recording of the primary components of Islamic juridicial process. When presenting this information, he is confident of his sources. This display of confidence

[458] *Talib*: A person who is determined to learn the science of *hadith*; a *hadith* student.
[459] *Muhaddith*: A scholar who has learnt the science of *hadith*, memorised a sufficient number of *hadith* together with their texts, chains of transmission and narrators, and who knows the practical applications of these traditions.
[460] *Hafidh*: A scholar of *hadith* who memorised approximately 100 thousand *hadith* with their texts and chains of transmissions.
[461] *Hujjah*: A scholar of *hadith* who memorised approximately 300 thousand *hadith* with their texts and chains of transmissions.
[462] *Haqim*: A scholar who memorised the whole body of *hadith* collections—texts, chain of transmission, etc.
[463] See more details: Aliyyulkari, *Şerhu nuhbeti'l-fiker*, p. 3-4; Babanzade, *Tecrid* p. 8.
[464] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 74.
[465] ibid., 75.

suggests he has scanned all major *tabaqat* books. Otherwise, Gülen's comments would be wrong. However, thoughts exhibited in his works do not collide with Islamic literature or have never been refuted.

Gülen's close interest in the lives of the companions and his detailed knowledge on the subject were discussed in previous sections. Here, I will look at some of Gülen's comments on the characteristics of the companions. He emphasises that it would be highly unrealistic to claim companions' fluency in local vernaculars when delivering the message of Islam in foreign lands. Drawing on Islamic biographical sources, Gülen informs there were only three or four people among the companions who could speak a foreign language and these people were always with the Prophet to translate[466] his correspondence.[467] This high level of knowledge and attention to detail displayed in Gülen's works leads researchers to the conclusion that Gülen closely follows the *sunnah* and the characteristics that belong to the companions. The important point here is Gülen's knowledge of existence—or nonexistence—of an issue that is related to *sunnah* and companions in the literature. Gülen displays a difference from others by pointing out such minute details. Gülen's approach—i.e. offering detailed information in explaining historical events and creating theses—displays his profound scholarly knowledge as well as his principle of convincingly proving his case.

Giving some examples about Gülen's emphasis on details would bring clarity to the issue. At first glance, these details may be inconspicuous and ignored. However, they do not escape Gülen's attention and comments. This characteristic of Gülen's highlights the importance of scanning and interpreting the *sunnah* and Islamic hagiography with utmost care, and points out the possibility of these details offering

[466] The necessity of learning foreign languages may be inferred from this practice of the Prophet.
[467] Gülen, *Ümit Burcu, Kırık Testi-4*.p, 194.

solutions to problems encountered in the present time. Therefore, looking into the *sunnah* and the lives of the companions needs to be made from a holistic perspective as well as in detail.

Gülen draws attention to social issues, for instance, men having long hair, which sometimes become issues of criticism. He argues that the *hadith* narrating that Qatadah—when he accepted Islam—was cautioned by the Prophet to cut his hair is not sound. He maintains that it is highly unlikely for the Prophet to say something that is not in accordance with the general principles of Islam,[468] and no such narration exists in any reliable *hadith* sources. Gülen points out certain biographical works mentioning that most of the companions had long and plaited hair. His evidence is that when some companions tied their hair, the Prophet advised them to let their hair loose so they can also benefit from blessings during *sajdah* (prostration).[469] He brings further clarity to the issue by another comment, which also indicates his high level knowledge on the companions. For example, Gülen argues that Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman had long hair and the Prophet never ordered these three of his closest friends to cut their hair short.[470] If the narration about Qatadah was sound, the Prophet would have warned his close friends—who accepted Islam before Qatadah—about their hair, and Qatadah would have understood this sensitivity before being warned by the Prophet. As can be seen by these examples, Gülen counters the *hadith* by providing answers from the body of *sunnah*. On the issue of Qatadah's long hair, he proves there exists no such record in *hadith* literature, thus putting forth the view that men having long hair may even be considered as *sunnah*—depending on the intention of the

[468] It is beneficial to remember that Gulen's view asserts certain *hadith* scholars' dexterity to tell whether a given text—on the basis of its context and meaning—is a *hadith* or not. Attempting to make an inference on the basis of this piece of information would make it possible to say that Gulen—in light of his close acquaintance with the Prophet and his *sunnah*—possesses the ability to argue for the unlikelihood of this text being attributable to the Prophet.
[469] Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad* 6/8, 391; Abdurrazzak, *al-Musannaf* 2/183.
[470] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Prizma 4(Prism*)(Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 378.

individual.[471] With this defence and proof system and by following a logical way, Gülen offers his interlocutor rational observations. He draws attention to the practicability of the *sunnah* and the fact it does not clash with present day values. Thus, he places the *sunnah* in a problem-solving position.

In evaluating the numbers of the companions provided in various *hadith* and biographical sources, Gülen puts forth a rather different comment. According to Ibn Hajar, there were 130 thousand companions during the time of the Prophet. Although he accepts the accuracy of this number, Gülen displays a different approach to its assessment. Providing available sources and researches as evidence, he argues that the number of companions' graves in Medina Cemetery is less than ten thousand. Retaining his clarity of mind on this issue, he suggests that the remaining 120 thousand companions were dispersed to different parts of the world to deliver the message of Islam.[472] This may be seen as a minor detail. However, when comparing the historical data with the actual number of graves of companions, the value of this little detail becomes obvious. Otherwise, the data provided on the numbers of the companions would remain unsatisfactory. It is possible to say that Gülen, while explaining his views about companions' migration, may be inferring duty for the *Hizmet* movement, whose members represent the Prophet's companions in our time.

In his works, Gülen prefers to focus on companions' behaviour, and derive training and education rules therefrom. In this way, he focuses on the companions and illustrates them as role models. It is noticed that Gülen is well informed regarding the sources relevant to his point of focus and draws important—and amazing—inferences.

[471] During his chats, Gulen sometimes gives presents to his guests. This is due to his *sunnah* understanding. During one of these gathering, he took off his headgear and asked his assistant to give it as a gesture to a man with long hair sitting among the audience. He then adds: 'It is not to be though that I disapprove the long hair or reprove him; wearing long hair is *sunnah*, provided that the intention is correct.' (Mustafa Erdil, April, 2008, visiting of Fethullah Gülen)
[472] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Prizma 3 (Prism)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 38.

For example, emphasising Abu Bakr, 'Umar's talking less—out of respect—in the presence of the Prophet, Gülen asserts, 'I would argue that if all *hadith, sirah* and *maghazi* books were scanned, the totality of Abu Bakr's talks in the presence of the Prophet would not amount to one hundred sentences.'[473] This is a striking argument concerning the *Sunnah* a point that can be put forth following careful research. A personality like Gülen, who is in the centre of attention for his views, is normally expected not to speak baselessly on these kinds of serious matters. Gülen also argues that 'Umar's speeches in the presence of the Prophet are so few that they can be counted easily. Yet, 'Umar spent many years with the Prophet.[474] Capturing this point, which can constitute a rule of manners, and commenting on it would require a serious revision of literature. Certain moral rules may be inferred from Gülen's deduction; such as, the right of speech in a gathering belongs to the most knowledgeable and experienced person, highlighting qualified people, respect for knowledge and holders of knowledge, trust and confidence in the leader (especially the Prophet).

In another example, when asked about whether a *hadith* exists saying, 'When a person drinks alcohol his prayer will not be accepted for forty days,' Gülen answered clearly: 'There exists neither an explicit Qur'anic verse commanding to repeat someone's prayers offered after consuming alcohol, nor a *hadith* that is *mursal*, *marfu'*, *da'if,* or *matruk*.'[475] Thus, he clarifies a contentious issue that can cause trouble in a community.[476] The statement 'the prayer of one who drinks alcohol is not accepted,' conflicts with fundamental principles of Islam regarding human beings. However, intoxication may diminish the quality of the prayer and interfere with a person's inner feelings vis-à-vis God during worship.

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[473] *Ümit Burcu, Kırık Testi-4(The Bearing of Hope)*.p, 57-58.
[474] ibid., 58.
[475] *Fasıldan Fasıla 1* (*From Chapter to Chapter)*(Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 283-284.
[476] For verdicts on the consumption of alcohol (*hadd al- shurb*) see (Bukhari, *Hudûd*, 4; Muslim, *Hudûd*, 35; Abû Dâ'wud, 35, 36; Tirmidhî, *Hudûd*, 14, 15).

Commenting with regards to material wealth in *tasawwuf* (Sufism), Gülen advises not to abandon material gains, but highlights the importance of renouncing the love of riches in the heart. He diverts attention to the *hadith* corpus, saying, 'In fact, it is impossible to see a statement by the Prophet prohibiting, in its absolute sense, richness and possessions.'[477] Deducing such a legal decision and presenting it as *hujjah* (proof, evidence) would necessitate scanning the whole corpus of *hadith*—including weak *hadith*.

Gülen also brings in some explanations concerning the dress code in Islam, which is another contentious issue presented by certain groups as a fundamental part of the religion. The issue of the turban (headgear for man) is one example. Gülen emphasises that reputable *hadith* compilations, i.e. Bukhari and Muslim, contain no narration from the Prophet concerning wearing a turban. He mentions a narration about the Prophet wearing a black turban and letting one end hang down over his back during the conquest of Mecca.[478] However, he says that narrations related to receiving extra rewards for praying while wearing a turban[479] are mentioned in secondary *hadith* collections (*zawa'id*) and not main sources of *hadith* (*ummahat*). Here he highlights an important point: he believes that issues like wearing a turban come under secondary matters of Islam and insisting on them would make the practice of religion difficult.[480] Looking from a logical standpoint, one would understand that Gülen must have studied all *hadith* collections classified under *ummahat* and *zawa'id* to reach this conclusion.

Up until this point, some examples illustrating Gülen's thorough knowledge and understanding of *hadith* sources have been dealt with. The non-availability of any

[477] Gülen, *Kur'andan İdrake Yansıyanlar(Reflections on the Quran)*.p, 332.
[478] Muslim, *hac* 453; Abû Dâwûd, *libâs* 21.
[479] Al-Daylami,, *al-Musnad,* 2/265; al-Sakhawi, *al-Maqasid al-Hasana*,, s 423.
[480] Gülen, *Prizma 4(Prism)*.p, 121.

works contradicting the above examples leads to the conclusion that Gülen is correct in his thinking. The soundness of evidence Gülen presents in his works and close connections with *sunnah* render his theses strong.

Also, it is possible to say that Gülen has thorough knowledge of the lives of the companions and *hadith* narrators. The discipline of *rijal (narrators)* [481] plays an important role in safeguarding the *sunnah*, as an error committed in the chain of narrators negatively affects the authenticity of the *hadith*. This is the reason why Gülen attributes special importance to the discipline of *rijal* and is passionate about teaching this science.[482] He is convinced that studies were done on *rijal* since the time of the followers of the companions. He argues that chains of narrators and textual criticisms were carried out during that time, important *rijal* books were authored as well, and all these works were taken under care and protection.[483] A proper understanding of the level of Gülen's knowledge of *sunnah* would require a perusal of the works he studied. This comprises numerous large volumes of *hadith* works and corpuses.[484]

One may say that Gülen, with his modern *hadith* comments, exhibits a different approach than his contemporaries. He is convinced that the *sunnah* sheds light on all kinds of problems in the past, and contemporary problems can be solved in the light of *sunnah* as well. His focus on basic issues, such as individual and community education, progress in modern technologies and social events, causes him to study the *sunnah* deeper and come up with new deductions and analogies. For this reason, he further trusts the *sunnah* and attributes more value to it.

[481] The chain of narrators that have allowed future generations to access *hadiths* that can be traced back to the Prophet.
[482] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 82.
[483] Gülen, *Zamanın Altın Dilimi,(The Golden Realm of Time) Çağ Ve Nesil-4*.p, 182.
[484] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 80, 83.

On the one hand, because of these characteristics, Gülen, as highlighted before, persistently refuses to accept titles, such as *mujaddid* and *mujtahid*, others give him. For this reason, the people in his immediate surroundings also reject this sort of excessive praising. On the other hand, it is possible to mention a welcome by Muslim scholars and scholars in the West. *Sunnah*-centred theses he put forward, evidence supporting his criticism, accuracy in his new comments and solutions exhibit his profound knowledge in the discipline of *sunnah* and give Gülen a place in the Islamic sciences. What is missing is the naming of his position. Although this is not important, it may give rise to some misunderstandings and false perceptions. It may also cause divisions within the Muslim world. At this point, Gülen takes a firm stance against discord and sedition. He highlights that any disagreements within the community can be solved—as mentioned earlier—by a council of Muslim scholars to accommodate modern day needs. He draws attention to the inadequacy of individual scholarly efforts and highlights the consequent problems that may result. Besides, legal decisions issued by an authoritative council with broad participation are more likely to be met with public acceptance and legitimacy. The Prophet did not appoint a caliph after himself. Gülen's view of the establishment of a council of *ijtihad* may stem from his own interpretation of the Prophet's decision to leave the selection of the caliph to a group of leaders among the companions.

Revelation-*hadith* correlation

According to Muslims, *wahy* (revelation) is an undeniable truth, as per the following Qur'anic verses:

> We have revealed to you (O Messenger), as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him; and We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Prophets who were raised in the tribes, and Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon; and We gave David the Psalms.[485]

[485] Qur'an 4:163.

> O you who believe! Believe in God and His messenger, and the Book He sent down to His messenger, and the Books He sent down before. Whoever rejects God, His angels, His Books, His messengers, and the Last Day, has strayed far in error.[486]

Revelation is a divine law carried along by a chain of prophets, beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad, the last prophet in Islamic theology. Also, the status of *hadith* vis-à-vis revelation is an important issue emphasised by Muslim scholars. Like scholars in the past and his contemporaries, Gülen also makes some remarks in this regard. I will focus on how Gülen differs from other scholars and understanding his views on Divine revelation and its mode of advent.

In the definition of revelation, Gülen does not differ from other scholars; his views are identical with other Muslim theologians. *Wahy* is a piece of knowledge revealed by God—with or without an intermediary—into the hearts of His prophets. In other words, it refers to spiritual words that God instils into the hearts of prophets by some means unknown to ordinary people. In Islamic literature, the mode of revelation differs from one prophet to the other. However, Gülen asserts that Prophet Muhammad received revelations in various ways and forms—he heard, perceived and experienced at *haqq al-yaqin* (knowledge gained through direct experience) level.[487] This may imply the Prophet was gifted with a different representative ability than other prophets. This may also constitute evidence for his status of *khatam al-nabiyyin* (Seal of the Prophets), as mentioned in the Qur'an. Receiving revelation in all forms and modes puts forth the truth that there will be no prophet after him for all realities, forms of the revelation are represented by him and the *hukm* (judgement) has been

[486] Qur`an 4:136
[487] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri 3(Emerald Hills of the Heart)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 77.

completed.[488] For Gülen, this characteristic of the Prophet also points out his status in the sight of Allah.

According to Gülen—Muslim scholars also share the same view—the Prophet received *wahy* in three different ways. Gülen bases his view on this Qur'anic verse: 'It is not for any mortal that God should speak to him unless it be by Revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger (angel) to reveal, by His leave, whatever He wills (to reveal).'[489] According to this verse, *wahy* (revelation) took place by means of God talking directly to the Prophet from behind a screen or sending his messenger Gabriel. Gülen explains that, according to Islamic sources such as Qur'an and *sunnah*, *wahy* was generally revealed[490] to prophets in this way.[491] While commenting on the Prophet's *hadith*, '*Ruh al-Quds* (Gabriel) blew into my heart,'[492] Gülen draws attention to a different mode of reception of the *wahy*. He argues that the event, with this aspect, is a spiritual exchange and the Prophet kept the nature of the experience a Divine secret.[493] Consequently, the content of the *wahy*, rather than its mode of revelation, is emphasised and the Prophet's *sunnah* is highlighted. That is to say, what is essential is the content and not the container. This is because the Prophet—while keeping the nature of the revelation to himself as a Divine secret—highlights the *sunnah*, which represents *wahy*'s practical aspect. From the present day point of view, it is important in this respect for *wahy* is an event of the past; however, its products—Qur'an and *sunnah*—are still in effect.

After this formal information and definition of *wahy*, alongside the Qur'an—which is *wahy al-matluw*—it is needed to focus on *hadith qudsi* (sacred *hadith*),

[488] "...This day I have perfected for you your Religion (with all its rules, commandments and universality), completed My favor upon you..." (Qur'an 5:3).
[489] Qur'an 42:51.
[490] Bukhârî, *bad'u'l-vahy*, 3-5.
[491] Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri 3*.p, 79.
[492] Ma'mar b. Râshid, *al-Jâmi'* s, 125; at-Tabarânî, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, 8/166.
[493] Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri (Emerald Hills of the Heart)3*.p, 78.

which are represented by the Prophet. *Hadith qudsi* represent God's message expressed in the Prophet's words.[494] In other words, *hadith qudsi* is a *hadith* delivered in its meaning by Gabriel, but its text is expressed by the Prophet's words.[495] Here may come to mind the question of 'what is the difference between *wahy* and *hadith qudsi*?' The most important factor that differentiates *wahy* and *hadith qudsi* is the wording. In *wahy*, Gabriel delivers God's message in His words. In *hadith qudsi*, Gabriel receives God's message in meaning and delivers this message to the Prophet. The Prophet then renders this meaningful message into sentences with his own words and delivers it to people. In terms of their sacred source, *hadith qudsi* and *wahy* spring from God. However, regarding characteristics, *hadith qudsi* is not like *wahy*, thus not included in the Qur'an.[496] The most important feature of *hadith qudsi* is its wording, which belongs to the Prophet. For this reason, sacred *hadith* do not have the miraculous eloquence that the Qur'an possesses.[497] It may be necessary to add here that it is essential not to differentiate between *hadith* and *hadith qudsi*. Both are in the same *hadith* category.[498]

In Gülen's view, *hadith qudsi* and the Prophet's statements—regardless of their form or mode of reception—are all inspired by revelation. According to him, the Prophet, being the most eloquent of the Arabs, expressed in the best form and wording what is inspired into his heart as *hadith qudsi*.[499] Concerning *wahy*, *hadith qudsi* and *hadith* stemming from the same source, Gülen shares similar views with many Muslim scholars. According to Subhi al-Salih, the Qur'an and *hadith* are identical in terms of their source, both being revealed by God, as indicated in the

[494] *Kendi İklimimiz,(Our Climate) Prizma 5* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 152.
[495] Subhi es-Salih, *Hadis İlimleri ve Hadis Istılahları*, vol. 8 (Istanbul: M.U. Theology Foundation Publishing, 2009).p, 247.
[496] Talat Koçyiğit, *Hadis Istılahları*, vol. 2 (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi Publishing, 1985).p, 123-124.
[497] Muhammad Accâc al-Hatîb, *As-Sunnatu Kabla't-Tadvîn* (Cairo, 1963).
[498] Muhammed Ebu Zehv, *Hadis ve Hadisçiler*, trans. M. Ali Sönmez, Selman Başaran (Istanbul: Ensar Publishing, 2007).p, 38.
[499] Gülen, *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler -2*.(*Questions and Answers*) p, 144-145.

verse, 'That (which he conveys to you) is but a Revelation that is revealed to him.'[500] Al-Salih states that, from the *wahy* point of view, he does not differentiate between the Qur'an and *hadith qudsi* as both were inspired into the Prophet's heart.[501] Al-Shafi'i (d. 819 CE),[502] and Al-Ghazzali (d. 1111 CE) highlights similar views.[503] *Wahy* and *sunnah* both stem from the same source even though they are considered different from each other. At this point, Koçyiğit asserts that *hadith* and *hadith qudsi* have the same source and are based on *wahy*, and the majority of Muslim scholars share the same view.[504]

Gülen emphasises that *hadith* is inspired by *wahy*. He deems the ambiguous expression *ma* (whatever) in the verse 53:3-4 to include everything in universe the Prophet delivered as *wahy ghayr al-matluw*—be it *hadith qudsi* or *hadith*.[505] Here, one may say that hesitation and drawback arise in the criticism of the *sunnah* as it is inspired by *wahy*. As *wahy* is closed to any criticism, a critical approach to *sunnah* may cause objections. However, these inferences may, at the same time, be considered as evidence to the *sunnah* being a strong source of reference.

All these above views may be summed up by one question: 'If *wahy* and *hadith* stem from a Divine source, looking from a definition and practice point of view, what are the main points separating—and at the same time linking together—the two elements?'

In these two elements, God's words were classified as *wahy*, and speeches and behaviours of the Prophet as *sunnah*. Therefore the point where these two elements differ is very clear. As for the difference in practice, *wahy* is the primary reference

[500] Qur'an 53:4.
[501] es-Salih, *Hadis İlimleri Ve Hadis Istılahları*, 8.p, 247.
[502] al-Shafi'i, *al-Risala*, 91-93.
[503] Gazzâlî, *al-Mustasfâ*, I, p.83.
[504] Koçyiğit, *Hadis Istılahları*, 2.p, 125.
[505] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*. (*The Messenger of God: Muhammad*) p, 418.

point in terms of legislation and the *sunnah* is the secondary source. However, with both stemming from the same Divine source, these two sources are always considered together in legislative processes. With its miraculous and inimitable character, *wahy* does differ from the *sunnah*. Besides, the Qur'an has been recorded in *al-law al-mahfuz* (the Preserved Tablet), and neither the messenger who brought the message, Gabriel, nor the Prophet have any authority to add anything into it.[506] As mentioned in the Qur'an, *wahy* is and will always be protected.[507] Looking from this point, *wahy* is under God's protection. Therefore, tampering with it is out of question. It is equally important to preserve *hadith*'s originality without any tampering as it is inspired by *wahy*. At this point, the Prophet prohibited false statements about himself. This prohibition aims to protect the *hadith* against tampering attempts. Thus, fabrication of *hadith* in later periods was warded off by these *hadith*.

However, according to Gülen, where *hadith* differs from *wahy* in terms of application, *wahy*—although it is a Divine command—leaves its representative quality and ability to the *sunnah*. What is known for sure is that *wahy* is not represented directly by itself; its physical body and tongue is *sunnah* and *hadith*. *Wahy*, in a way, comes to life in a society through *sunnah*. Representation of *wahy* is directly proportionate with the life of the Prophet, who was honoured with receiving the *wahy*.

Gülen's defence of *hadith*

Muslim scholars link evidence supporting the originality and recording of the *sunnah* back to the Prophet through *hadith* history and methodology. According to the scholars, evidence and other sources in this area are supported by historical records. They maintain that safeguarding these materials throughout Islamic history since the

[506] es-Salih, *Hadis İlimleri ve Hadis Istılahları*, 8.p, 247.
[507] "Indeed it is We, We Who send down the Reminder in parts, and it is indeed We Who are its Guardian." (Qur'an 15:9).

beginning of the Prophet's mission is a reality. Weak *hadith* have been criticised and separated from those that are sound, and their injuries and weaknesses identified in detail.

Sunnah, attracting attention with this aspect, has also entered the field of interest of non-Muslim researchers during the last few centuries. *Sunnah* has been, intentionally or unintentionally, subjected to criticism and questioned. This criticising and questioning process has continued for certain periods and still continues. The ascertaining and recording of the *sunnah*, and its compilation, authenticity and status as a source of reference constitute the focus of criticism. However, according to many Muslim scholars, these criticisms are based on divergent evidence, insufficient arguments and unreliable sources. Arguments on this issue—for and against—have been explained in Chapter One. In this section, Gülen's views and comments in defence of *sunnah* will be examined. An attempt will be made to assess these criticisms from his perspective and analyse his approach.

Primarily, it is necessary to make it clear that, from an academic perspective, examination of the evidence of the critical views is as important as the analysis of Muslim scholars' evidence. If Muslim scholars' research and inferences are bound by a cause-aim-effect relationship, the same applies to any research concerning *sunnah*. For this reason, each claimant is obliged to base their claim on concrete evidence, assert and clearly explain the reason, aim and conclusion of their thesis. Otherwise, a criticism or analysis that is not based on concrete evidence moves away from being academic. Thus, values and statements huddle around an assumption. Starting from this point, it can be said that criticism of matters deeply concerning individuals and societies require a more delicate approach. Suspicions stemming from baseless and unproven criticisms can cause handicaps and faith-based social disintegrations.

Therefore, criticism of *sunnah* must be based on sound and concrete evidence in connection with a cause-aim-effect relationship.

After this brief introduction, it is beneficial to deal with Gülen's approach to criticism of *sunnah*. Approaching the subject with questions may be more reasonable. First of all, does Gülen have any set of criteria for criticising and assessing *sunnah*? Is criticism of *sunnah* in terms of authenticity and essentiality reasonable? What is his attitude on this issue? These and similar questions will shed light on Gülen's approach to *sunnah* criticism.

Gülen does not choose to be directly involved in discussions on *sunnah* developed in the historical process. He refrains from asserting his views in a destructive and radical manner. In putting forth his arguments and evaluating opposing sides' arguments, he considers respect paramount even when he regards his interlocutor as being wrong. Consequently, he expects his opponent to be controlled in their criticism, and respect available sources of reference and established historical deposition. To preserve moderation in criticism and questioning, he takes certain criteria as his basis. According to Gülen, criticism exists to find out the rights and wrongs of a matter, and to determine the ideal by way of comparison. For a critic, being open to criticism is an academic principle. Furthermore, a critic should keep their thesis unblemished from personal feelings and ethnic interests. The critic's main goal should be finding the truth. Otherwise, immoderate criticism indulged in shrewdness can cause damage to the truth.[508] Also, while duly expressing views in his area of expertise, a critic should refrain from asserting views on matters outside their field of expertise; this becomes especially important in religious matters. Likewise, moderation in criticism is essential; one should steer away from destructive

[508] Gülen, *Vuslat Muştusu(Glad Tidings of a Reunion) Kırık Testi-8 (The Broken Jug)*.p, 279.

criticism.[509] Gülen believes healthy communication can be established and truth achieved only if these criteria are observed.

Gülen draws attention from within these criteria to *hadith* being subjected to unregulated and deliberate criticism by some critics, giving rise to suspicions.[510] Suspicion is far away from logic and knowledge. It is based on assumption and doubt, and cannot be freed from these injuries unless proven true by real evidence. A thesis can be freed from doubt if proven by results based on strong evidence. Such facts and values, around which some doubts are created, would not lose anything from their health and continue to reserve their authority as primary sources until proven otherwise.

Analysing Gülen's views on the criticism of *sunnah*, Canan draws attention to a point. According to him, Gülen, with his work entitled *Sonsuz Nur*, does not criticise works written in the past, complement any missing elements, or come up with an alternative *hadith* methodology. In this work, he prefers to deal with *hadith* that have been subjected to criticism rather than *sahih hadith*, and express, in his peculiar way, his views about their soundness.[511] *Hadith* and comments carefully selected for this work are seen in the nature of answers to the opponents of *sunnah* and to criticism of the *hadith*.[512] In his work, Gülen chooses to give, in his unique style, encyclopaedic information to his addressee. Also, he selects issues subjected to criticism during times when adherence to *sunnah* becomes weak, and draws attention to the status of these *hadith* in the society. Being in line with present day values and offering solutions to problems will automatically remove question marks from *hadith*. Thus the *hadith* will have proven itself. With this thinking, Gülen offers de facto and

[509] *Ümit Burcu,(The Bearing of Hope) Kırık Testi-4*.p, 225.
[510] *Prizma 4(Prism)*.p, 195.
[511] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 109
[512] ibid. 96.

empirical answers to criticisms. Whereas the *sunnah*, with its practicability being a subject of debate, proves its own health and presents answers to doubts. A *hadith* reality, whose correctness in this field has been proven, means its origin and connection to the main source has been strengthened and doubts have been removed.

According to Canan, Gülen, with this concise work, has explained criticisms in a way that is understandable by all segments of the society. Gülen's work holds a significant place with regard to proving the determination and codification of the *hadith*.[513] This work, in fact, provides crucial information although it is not authored to defend *sunnah*. This may be deemed as Gülen's stance in the defence of *sunnah*, which stems from his confidence in *sunnah*.

Gülen's response to non-Muslim scholars

When and how did criticism and doubts on *hadith* and *sunnah* begin and how has the Muslim world been influenced by them? What is Gülen's attitude vis-à-vis these criticisms and uncertainties? Has Gülen authored an independent work to specifically defend *hadith* and answer to related criticisms? What are his views about works published in this area and what are his recommendations? Are Muslim scholars' and intellectuals' defence and evidence adequate? What should be done regarding the defence of *hadith*? The answers to these questions reveal Gülen's stance against *sunnah* criticism.

Gülen is seriously concerned about *sunnah* criticism within the Muslim as well as the non-Muslim world. For a clear understanding of the subject, it must be stressed that the essence of Islam allows all views and thoughts—which do not stem from *wahy*—to be questioned and criticised in the name of finding the truth. This is one of the fundamental principles of Islam, and prepares the ground for the production

[513] ibid., 102.

of ideas and theories. Thus, the Qur'an and *sunnah* guarantee the freedom of scholarly and academic/scholarly research, and also encourage constructive criticism and questioning. At this point, Gülen sets limitations to criticism by saying, 'In Islam there is self-criticism. Everything that is not verified by *wahy* (i.e. anything other than Qur'an and *sunnah*) has been questioned among the Muslims.'[514] The case of a woman criticising 'Umar, while he was delivering a sermon, by saying 'O 'Umar! What you have said is wrong. The truth of the matter is such and such,'[515] is an anecdote illustrating a good example for the pursuit of the truth. Due to these and other similar examples, freely discussing Islamic issues among jurists and theologians has become possible during later periods. There exist countless voluminous works and examples about this. In Islamic sciences, thoughts and theories have been vigorously criticised, and these criticisms tolerated to a certain extent.[516] All these debates and discussions were not aimed at criticising the essence of the *wahy* or *sunnah*, but were focused on the soundness of inferences derived from them. These efforts, in one way, reflect the positive side of the questioning. What is essential here is fairness and justice.

Gülen is apprehensive that negative and destructive criticisms—especially questioning of some of the prominent *hadith* narrators like Abu Hurayrah, Anas b. Malik, 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar—would pave the way for disparaging criticism of the Prophet. The questioning of the Prophet, the bearer of the *wahy*, will soon evolve—in the eyes of a superstitious sect—into questioning of Archangel Gabriel.[517] At this stage, questioning Gabriel's legitimacy would unavoidably mean questioning of the existence of the Creator, the owner of the *wahy*. Criticisms and questionings arising in

[514]M. Fethullah Gülen, *Mefkure Yolculugu (A Journey into the Ideals), (*Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2014).p, 409-417.
[515] Bayhaqî, *al-Sunan al-Kubra* 7/233; Ajlûnî, *Kashf al-Khafâ* 1/317.
[516] Gülen, "Fethullah Gülen Eleştiriye Kapalı mı? Kendisini Eleştiriden Muaf mı Görüyor?".
[517] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 388-389.

such an environment would trespass all boundaries and give rise to a rationale that everything can be questioned and criticised. In this situation, everyone, regardless of being qualified or not, will chose to deduce rules according to their own opinion and the fundamentals of the religion will be damaged. Thus, doubts over the primary sources, the Qur'an and *sunnah*, would become inevitable. Because of these kinds of justifiable concerns, Gülen voluntarily assumed the duty of defending the *sunnah* against these movements and disparaging questionings. Gülen, due to his belief, is known as a personality who depicts serious caution and shows sensitivity to safeguarding the essence of the religion.

In Gülen's view, this kind of questioning began during the period when Muslims were first acquainted with Neoplatonic Greek philosophy.[518] These thoughts finding place in the Muslim world through philosophy highlights a vacuum of faith experienced during that period. This, in a way, can also be interpreted as differing thoughts finding their place in the social body due to interaction between communities. These thoughts entered Islamic cultural and scientific life through books during the time of Abbasid Caliph Ma'mun. These thoughts—which initially focused on debates of the Qur'an's creation—with the influence of Greek philosophy, were later directed towards criticism of the *sunnah*. Gülen holds that these approaches and the idea of criticising were not seen among *Sunni* scholars, but were rather prevalent among the *Mu'tazilite* followers who indulged in philosophy.[519] With the introduction of philosophical thought currents among the Muslims, he indicates the emergence of

[518] Philosophy is considered in two parts. The first part—philosophy and wisdom—serves the social life of mankind, its morality and maturity, and the development of arts. This part of philosophy is in reconciliation with the Qur'an and religious sciences, and serves the Qur'an and its wisdom. The second part of philosophy is conducive to heresy, atheism and lowering people into the quagmire of "mother nature", and gives way to hedonism, sinful pleasures, heedlessness and misguidance. This part is in opposition to the Qur'an and religious values. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Asa-Yı Musa* (Istanbul: Şahdamar Publishing, 2007).p, 4.
[519] Gülen, *Yol Mülahazaları, Prizma 6(Contemplating the Journey)*.p, 186-187.

various sects, such as *Mu'tazilah*, *Jabriyyah*,[520] *Murji'ah*[521] and *Mushabbihah*[522] among Muslims. He denotes that the followers of these sects chose to fabricate *hadith* to support their arguments and criticise the companions of the Prophet who narrated *hadith* that do not conform with their view.[523] In fact, views of these schools of thought were criticised and refuted by *Sunni* scholars with strong evidence during their respective periods. However, the roots of intellectual approaches among the Muslims that appear lately are likely to go back to these periods, and their views may be considered stemming therefrom. Re-emergence of criticisms—which has already been responded and refuted—and advocacy of these views among Muslims suggest the faith gap experienced in the past is also valid in present day.

Remaining silent against criticisms of *sunnah* stemming from *Mu'tazilah* and other sects is not possible for Gülen. It should be noted that Gülen is a very strong believer of Sunni Islam. From Gülen's perspective anything outside this circle is problematic. Moreover, he is known to closely follow current issues and opposing thoughts concerning the *sunnah*. His arguments in this regard are clearly visible in his various works. As mentioned earlier, Gülen maintains that the view that claims the 'writing down of *hadith*s began upon 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz's decree, and not before,'[524] is not based on valid reasons. He emphatically bases his argument on original works authored during early periods. Pointing out numerous books and other sources in this field, he draws attention to the presence of necessary answers. In a way, he argues that these sources are not studied carefully and deemed non-existent.

[520] A school of thought established by Ma'bad b. Khalid al-Juhani (d. 85/704). Ma'bad argued against predestination and maintained that man has absolute freedom in his actions and thoughts.
[521] The *Murji'ah* sect first emerged during the tumultuous period of 'Uthman, the third caliph. The main pillar of this theological school of thought is that sins would not damage the faith and good deeds while in disbelief would not render any benefit. In other words, if someone believed in Islam and adopted its way, their violation of Islamic rules is not important. A believer committing grave sins would remain Muslim and be eligible for paradise as long as they remained faithful.
[522] In Islam, *Mushabbihah* is a theological school of thought that likens the creation with God: anthropomorphism.
[523] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*. (*The Messenger of God: Muhammad*) p, 546.
[524] ibid.518.

This way, he highlights academic inadequacy in the Muslim world and moving away from original sources. For that reason, shallowness in scholarly research leads researchers to copying the thoughts and views of the past.

At this point, this may come to mind: since Gülen is so sensitive about and closely follows the *sunnah*, why did he not author a specific and independent book to refute critics of *sunnah*? This may be viewed as a legitimate expectation of Gülen's readers and followers. At the same time, his neglect of authoring an independent work may be seen as a deficiency. Naturally, the reasons behind this neglect should be discussed and questioned. As such, Gülen leaves an open door for comments about his views and himself.

Approaching this issue from Gülen's epistemological point of view, he emphasises that knowledge is not the exclusive property of an individual or nation; therefore, no one can claim exclusive ownership of it.[525] Development of thoughts and ideas in academic studies, and achieving results, can only be possible with the contributions of everyone who has an idea in the relevant area. For this reason, Gülen perhaps did not choose to narrow the field by authoring a work on an important discipline such as *sunnah*. Whereas, by mentioning *sunnah* in his works often and keeping the sensitivity in this area always current, it is possible to say that he may have endeavoured to call Muslim scholars and intellectuals to take up their responsibilities on this issue. In addition, he might prefer to focus on more concrete issues for the revival of Islamic understanding rather than wasting his time in discussing delicate and academic problems which have no benefit for lay people.

Looking from another angle, Gülen is known to have adopted *sunnah* in his daily life. He may be emphasising the importance of *sunnah* simply by applying it in

[525] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* p,406.

his own practical life. *Sunnah*, whose principles are interpreted and applied in real life, would thus be defended in a more reasonable way. Adherents of *sunnah* would more diligently study the discipline they practice and find answers to arising criticisms. This, consequently, would increase awareness of *sunnah* among Muslims. Gülen's preference of practical *hadith* has been highlighted at the beginning of this chapter.

Sunnah, like the Qur'an, caters to all times and is open to new interpretations. Focusing on Gülen's omission of authoring an independent work dedicated to answering criticisms on *sunnah*, his unwillingness to restrict the defence of *sunnah* within a certain period of time may be deemed justifiable. Also, according to Gülen, the *sunnah* is prevalent and part of life. Therefore, *sunnah* should not be treated as a phenomenon about which authoring a one off publication would be enough. This may also be perceived in such a way that doubts and criticisms manufactured about *sunnah* did not begin and end during a certain period of time in the past; this is an ongoing continuum. In this continuum, *sunnah* must be defended perpetually as well as its aspect open to new interpretations must be investigated. In one aspect, interpreting *hadith* in the context of present times and bringing in reasonable answers to new problems would, in fact, constitute factual evidence to the soundness of *sunnah*. At this point, one may say that Gülen invites meticulous researchers to be vigilant about the *sunnah*.

In addition, Gülen—by his natural disposition—prefers to stay away from the grounds of controversy, and more particularly refuses to render a religious source, such as *hadith* or *sunnah*, a subject of contention . For this reason, he may have chosen to put forth his views on *sunnah* step by step when necessary instead of collecting them in a separate work with a limited capacity. Along with these

considerations, however, it would not be an overstatement to say that Gülen's work titled *Sonsuz Nur* practically presents its readers with solid answers supported by concrete evidence while explaining the Prophet's life and his *sunnah*. According to Yıldırım, this work is about the Prophet's attributes, his mission, his teachings, and lessons derived from his *sunnah*, and constitutes a source of reference for the discipline of *fiqh al-sunnah* (the understanding of the philosophy of prophetic tradition). Many scholars such as late R. al-Buti and A. Ghuddah have the same opinion.[526] Also, the last part of the second volume of the work is a kind of response especially to the determination and recording of the *sunnah* and its status as a primary source of reference. Besides his concise presentation in this way, Gülen prefers to leave the hard work to competent researchers.

Gülen also closely follows works authored for the defence of *sunnah* and puts forth his views about them. Moreover, he uses these works to support his views. Evaluating from this aspect, Gülen's approach constitutes evidence to his thesis that every owner of a view must assume some responsibility for it. According to Gülen, anti-*sunnah* movements induced by critical non-Muslim scholarship first appeared in Egypt and India and received their first refutation from there. The first work authored in the defence of *sunnah* is Mustafa al-Siba'i's (1915/1964) *al-Sunnah wa Makanatuha fi al-Tashri' al-Islami*. *Hujjiyah al-Sunnah*, which was co-authored by 'Abd al-Ghani and 'Abd al-Khalio. Muhammad 'Ajjaj al-Khatib's *al-Sunnah Qabla al-Tadwin* and *Abu Hurayrah: Rawiyat al-Islam* are other major works authored initially to defend *sunnah*.[527] By studying and investigating these works, Gülen confirms once more that, as mentioned above, efforts about *sunnah* cannot be attributed to an individual or a nation. Thus, he underlines the fact that the

[526] ibid., 17.
[527] Gülen, *Yol Mülahazaları, (Contemplating the Journey) Prizma 6 (Prism)*.p, 190.

responsibility of defending *sunnah* belongs to everyone who is qualified. In addition, Gülen's acceptance and investigation of these works is a sign of their reliability and the expression of the importance he attributes to the issue.

In light of the results of investigations and evidence presented in these works, Gülen draws attention to refutations against doubts that have been raised about *sunnah*. He argues that volumes of books have been written on issues of debate, such as the authenticity of *hadith*, reconciliation of contradictions and eliminating fabricated narrations, and most disputes have been resolved. Gülen opines that Abu Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Tahawi (843/935) allocated two of his works, *Mushkil al-Athar* and *Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar*, to the authenticity of the *sunnah* and its status as a primary source of reference. Gülen points out that reading these thick volumes of books would require quite a long time; however, he says they contain detailed information related to the solution of all problems in the field of *hadith*.[528] The abundance of these kinds of publications, which provide necessary evidence besides their large size and detailed contents, may be shown as another reason behind Gülen's unwillingness to write an independent book on *sunnah*. He usually bases his thoughts and evidence on these works, and gives weight to the introduction of these works to present times.

Gülen can be seen, in this regard, as giving satisfactory answers to points some critics stumbled on. He claims the narration that goes, 'We asked for the Prophet's permission to write down [*hadith*], he did not permit us to do so,'[529] which is accepted as evidence by Goldziher and his followers, is considered not worthy of mentioning by *hadith* experts. While pointing out the reliability of the *hadith* upon which Goldziher based his views, Gülen argues that the source with regard to the prohibition

[528] ibid.p, 191.
[529] Tirmidhî, *ilm*, 11; Hatîb al-Bağdâdî, *Takyîd al-ilm*, 32-33.

of recording *hadith* is different. According to him, the *hadith*, which constitutes evidence for this issue, is the one reported by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and recorded in Sahih Muslim—a famous and reliable source:[530] By establishing his argument in this way, Gülen asserts that Goldziher and his followers made an incorrect choice of *hadith* for their evidence, and based their arguments on carelessly chosen unreliable sources. Thus, he presents indirect proofs to highlight the inconsistency in their theses. Here Gülen appears to have shown a reference contrary to his thesis for the recording of *hadith*. However, the evidence justifying the recording of *hadith* that he presented is mentioned in Chapter One. If the readers do not pay attention and fail to investigate thoroughly, they may fall into contradictions about Gülen. The point he stresses is the unreliability of the *hadith* used by Goldziher. For this reason, Gülen's views on the defence of *hadith* should be sorted and compiled in a separate work. Even if Gülen had not authored such a work and has no intention of doing so in the future, the publishing of such a dedicated work appears to be necessary. Otherwise, access to accurate information by scanning through all his works will require a painstaking effort. This is a necessary endeavour to make Gülen's mission understood.

Continuing with the subject, Gülen emphasises the reliability of evidence and sources that Goldziher and his followers refer to. Gülen argues that these critics use *al-'Iqd al-Farid*[531] and *al-Aghani* as sources of reference to their views,[532] which can only be referred to as sources of poetry and general Arabic literature, and not of *hadith*.[533] This is for this reason Gülen emphasises the necessity for Goldziher's

[530] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 511.
[531] 'The Unique Necklace', a work that belongs to Ibn 'Abd Rabbih and lead him to fame. It covers the history of the Umayyads of al-Andalus from 'Abd al-Rahman I (750-788) to 'Abd al-Rahman III (912-961). Some sections contain Arab proverbs and other sections deal with morality and religious piety.
[532] A book of poetry and literature by Abu Faraj al-'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Quraishi al-Isfahani (d. 356/967).
[533] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 555, 589.

followers to take extra care about their sources before asserting any view on an Islamic issue. They are in his view not a legitimate religious source of reference. Calling to mind Goldziher's reference to *hadith* as 'some Arab proverbs,' the probability of his sources being these works Gülen pointed out dramatically increases. This prospect strengthens Gülen's thesis. At the same time, a situation like this arises: Goldziher and his followers, being fixated on the idea of discovering a fault in *hadith*, intentionally choose weaker sources for reference rather than the healthier ones. Nevertheless, to understand exact frame of Goldziher sources, one need more extensive research on his various works.

Highlighting contradictions by Goldziher and other critics, Gülen draws attention to mistakes they make in scanning sources. Goldziher comments on political bias, citing that Ibn Kathir, in his *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, blames Abu Hurayrah for taking sides with Mu'awiyyah against 'Ali. However, Gülen points out Ibn Kathir says the exact opposite of what they claim in his book,[534] and emphasises Ibn Kathir's establishing Abu Hurayrah's position against Umayyads, not supporting them.[535] According to Gülen, Abu Hurayrah is a cockshy for Orientalists. He is a narrator on whom they produce arguments to discredit in any case; Abu Hurayrah never forgot the *hadith* he once heard from the Prophet.[536]

According to Gülen, Goldziher and similar academics are known to be researchers well-versed in Islam.[537] As mentioned earlier, the majority of Western researchers have a good knowledge of Islam. However, this brings to mind Gülen's remark 'their sources mostly are works of poetry and literature.' This consequently suggests Gülen falls into contradictions in his examples and criticisms. That is, on one

[534] Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 8/108-114.
[535] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 556.
[536] ibid., 503.
[537] Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla 1(From Chapter to Chapter)*.p, 59.

hand, declaring their sources unreliable, but on the other hand, recognising their proficiency in Islamic sciences. At this point, questions must be raised about either the Islamic knowledge of Goldziher and his followers or the objectivity of their theses. Only one of the two options can prove to be true, because accurate knowledge leads to correct outcome and has little chance of misleading. Either the thesis attributing deficiency to their Islamic knowledge and usage of sources is justifiable, or Gülen's assertion of their proficiency is incorrect. Or, as another possibility, perhaps Gülen is right in his views, but Goldziher and others are prejudiced and subjective although their Islamic knowledge is complete. For this reason, they intentionally look for their supporting evidence in wrong sources to justify their biased views. At this point, Gülen's thought that they are not sincere in their intention prevails. For this reason, Gülen argues that those who are preoccupied with focusing their attention on criticising and questioning the *sunnah*, are, in fact, in an endeavour to turn the truth upside-down.[538] Therefore, they do not hesitate to look into wrong sources, hoping to find evidence to support their twisted views, although they have quite a good knowledge of Islam. It is exactly for this reason that Gülen focuses on their sources of reference, and asserts, as mentioned before, that they are not consistent in the choice of resources.

Illustrating this with an example, Gülen draws attention to the method and resources they employed in their effort to discredit Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri (d. 742 CE).[539] According to Gülen, Ya'qubi, a Shiite historian, is the first person who accused al-Zuhri for fabricating *hadith*. As said by Ya'qubi, to prevent Muslims from circumambulating the Ka'bah, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (d. 705 CE)[540] had Masjid

[538] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 555.
[539] According to Gülen, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri is an expert *hadith* scholar. He received *hadith* from tens of companions, and reported them to hundreds of followers and the generation that followed them. He started the official compilation process of *hadith* by 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz's decree. Ibid., 590.
[540] 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan (646-705), the fifth Umayyad Caliph.

al-Aqsa repaired and pleaded with al-Zuhri (d. 1154) to fabricate *hadith* to encourage Muslims for its circumambulation. As reported by Ya'qubi, al-Zuhri coined[541] the following *hadith*, which is mentioned in reputable *hadith* compilations such as Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad b. Hanbal: 'Do not set out on a sole journey to visit a mosque except for three Masjids: Al-Masjid al-Haram, my Masjid, and al-Masjid al-Aqsa.'[542] From this point onward, Gülen highlights Ya'qubi's inconsistencies in his sources. Firstly, since there exists no single provision or topic mentioning circumambulation of al-Masjid al-Aqsa, similar to the Ka'bah, in the history of Islam, Christianity or Judaism, how could it be possible for the Prophet to emphatically advise people to do so? Such advice would be inconsistent with the *sunnah* and the Qur'anic verse, 'From wherever you go out (for journeying), turn your face (O Messenger) towards the Sacred Mosque (in the Prayer).'[543]

Al-Masjid al-Aqsa is a sacred mosque for Muslims and not only itself but also its surroundings are declared sacred in the Qur'an.[544] Therefore, the abovementioned *hadith* is not fabricated; on the contrary, it is an authentic *hadith* indicating the value and importance of al-Masjid al-Aqsa along with al-Masjid al-Haram and al-Masjid al-Nabawi.[545] Hence, al-Masjid al-Aqsa was repaired and restored not only by 'Abd al-Malik, but also by the Prophet Dawud, Prophet Sulayman, Caliph 'Umar, Nur al-Din Zangi and Salah al-Din Ayyubi. Looking from this perspective, Ya'qubi's claiming a *sahih hadith* as 'fabricated' does not appear to be reasonable. On the other hand, according to historical records, Imam al-Zuhri (d. 742 CE) never met 'Abd al-Malik during the *hadith* reporting period. At that time, he was only a baby in his mother's arms. Another important point is that Ya'qubi's approaches and assertions are not

[541] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 587-588.
[542] Bukhârî, *savm*, 67; *tatawwu*, 14; Muslim, *hajj* 511.
[543] Qur'an 2:150.
[544] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 588.
[545] ibid. 484.

mentioned in any other Islamic source. Yet, judging by the timing, this event coincides with a period, i.e. the time of followers, when there existed thousands of *hadith* scholars. None of the scholars from among the followers mentioned this event in their works. That is, Ya'qubi's assumption and his thesis claiming Imam al-Zuhri fabricated a *hadith* is totally unfounded. Gülen argues that Goldziher's and his followers' leaving the main *hadith* sources and choosing Ya'qubi as their reference and using unfounded events as evidence is worrisome.[546] In this situation, the view of premeditation in *hadith* criticisms gains strength.

Thus, it becomes clear that certain thought movements have a premeditated approach to *sunnah*, persistently make *hadith* a subject of criticism, and intentionally portray many authentic and healthy *hadith*s as weak or fabricated.[547] Starting from Gülen's remarks displaying his respect for all religions and their value systems, it is safe to say that the standard in criticism and evaluation must be based on fairness. Criticism should be focused on the detection of the wrong, and care must be taken when criticising sensitive issues on religious values that have been already solved and become *al-qadiyyah al-muhkamah* ('matters decided', *res judicata*).

Criticisms and uncertainties that have been raised about *sunnah* are based on the assumption that *hadith* collections are false and the process of *hadith* fabrication began during the time of the followers. Gülen argues that Orientalists' claim of writing down of *hadith* began upon 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Aziz's decree 100 years after the Prophet is not correct; this is the beginning of the official compilation of *hadith*, and as shown by concrete evidence, the *sunnah* has been memorised and written down since the early days of the Prophetic mission. In addition to other evidence he provided to support his thesis, Gülen refers to the heritage left behind by Jabir b. 'Abd

[546] ibid. 588-589.
[547] ibid. 470.

Allah and Ibn Mas'ud, which consists of a significant number of written *hadith* approved by the Prophet and his companions.[548] Gülen argues that, despite all this strong evidence, there is an attempt to underestimate the *sunnah*—even negate it—in order to leave the Qur'an alone and open to freehand interpretations, and these *sunnah* criticism efforts are far from objective or constructive.[549] He stresses the impossibility of achieving good results by this kind of a critical approach.

Gülen also draws attention to certain sensitive points on studies Muslims carry out in the name of defending *hadith*. He reminds that not only the *sunnah*, but also the companions are subjected to criticism and discredit because, according to Gülen, the religion has been brought to the present day thanks to the serious efforts and meticulousness of the companions. Thus, criticising the companions means criticising the religious value system they represent. In Gülen's view, the companions, by their strict adherence to the rules, circulated the representation of the religion to future generations, and the representation of the *sunnah* in our age rests on the shoulders of Muslims. Therefore, Muslims have a responsibility to safeguard the *sunnah* and other religious values, and refute unfounded and incoherent criticisms directed at these values.[550] In light of Gülen's thoughts and views, it is possible to infer that he should support the defence of *sunnah* by authoring a separate work entirely dedicated to this issue.

At this point, the share of responsibility that falls on Muslims is to respect opponents' religious values while defending their own, to avoid unnecessary arguments and debates on religious matters, and to maintain their solemnity at all times. Conversely, arguing about religious values, using harsh rhetoric and criticism will make both parties lose, and consequently, impede dialogue efforts between

[548] ibid. 518.
[549] ibid. 594.
[550] ibid. 546.

members of different religions and lead to social and cultural polarisations.[551] What is imperative is to be able to accept every thought in their respective position.

Based on this reason, in his conferences, sermons, talks and written works, Gülen appears to keep away from debates and negative criticisms. As for *sunnah* criticism, he usually makes his comments without naming names and prefers to present positive, concrete evidence to answer criticisms. He does not give names when he uses terms such as 'Western intellectuals.' This is Gülen's usual style of expression. However, he occasionally mentions the names of certain intellectuals like Goldziher when analysing their views. However, the reason behind violating his own principles is not known. Also, he mentions the names of certain Muslim intellectuals that subscribe to Goldziher's views, such as Ahmad Amin, Abu Rayyah and 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq. Gülen's not explaining the reason behind mentioning these names opens the door for certain questions. It is possible to say that, in a way, he may have intended to draw attention to the current they started. Thus, he may have implied whom he intended to indicate by using the term 'Orientalists.' Besides this point, the usage of a blanket term like 'Orientalists' in a pejorative sense may put under suspicion many other non-Muslim who objectively investigate Islam. This may be the reason why he mentions the names of a few leading antagonists. In addition, wherever Gülen uses the term 'Orientalists,' he also mentions their respective views, thus avoiding ambiguity about the sense in which the term 'Orientalists' is being used.

Gülen argues that certain Orientalists' destructive criticisms may become an important factor in discouraging advocates involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue.[552] Whereas, starting from the Qur'anic verse, 'Say (to them, O Messenger): "O People of the Book, come to a word common between us and you, that we worship none but

[551] M.Fethullah Gülen, *Hoşgörü Ve Diyalog(Tolerance and Dialogue)* (İstanbul, Turkey: Merkür Publishing, 1999).p,10.
[552] ibid.10.

God, and associate none as partner with Him, and that none of us take others for Lords, apart from God. “If they (still) turn away, then say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims (submitted to Him exclusively),’ [553] Gülen takes dialogue as his basis for the exchange of ideas. He endeavours for the continuation of this dialogue.

Gülen demonstrates a firm and determined stance in the defence of *sunnah*. In this stance, he endorses intellectual and basic moral principles, and recommends positive thinking and positive action. If repetition is needed, he gives answers—together with rational and textual evidence—to the critique which asserts the view that *hadith* and *sunnah* are no more than customs prevalent during the time of the Prophet whose adoption in modern days are not possible. Thus, he strives to revive the *sunnah*, which is battered by suspicions, and bring it back to the lives of Muslims.

Response to Muslim intellectuals

What is Gülen’s approach to *hadith* criticisms raised by Muslim intellectuals? How does he comment on their shortcomings and how does he answer them with his own *hadith* interpretations? This section will attempt to find answers to these and similar questions.

Primarily, Gülen presents rational, psychological and intellectual explanations to doubts and questions raised by Muslim intellectuals who are influenced by *hadith* criticism. His approach and answers to Muslim intellectuals show similarity to those he adopts toward non-Muslim researchers. In his presentations, as mentioned earlier, he abstains from unnecessary debates and chooses not to use expressions that may give rise to dispute or close the door to dialogue. Discussing a problem in an environment of dispute may close the path of reconciliation and even carries the risk of bringing in theological tremors among Muslims. Besides these concerns, Gülen

[553] Qur’an 3:64.

draws attention to impasses Muslim intellectuals fall into and prefers to focus on supporting evidence and rectifiying their mistakes. At the same time, he concentrates his attention on the process and reasons for this kind of *hadith* criticism spreading among Muslims.

As mentioned earlier, the first doubts about *hadith* in the Muslim world were raised by the adherents of the *Mu'tazilah* school of theology. The *Mu'tazilah* school, which is prominent for its reason- and rational thought-based theology, attributes exceeding functions to human intellect and accepts reason as the most important arbiter in all religious matters. This school accepts the intellect as the second primary source among *al-adillah al-shar'iyyah* (proofs of the *shari'ah*) after Divine revelation.[554] That is, reason, on account of its functions, holds a status next to the Qur'an and *hadith* have been dropped in rank. Further, there is a stance against *hadith*. However, in Islam, intellect is a tool to understand and analyse Divine commands and derive new rulings. The Qur'an, hadith and intellect are factors that complement each other if they are used properly in their respective places. Deeming intellect as an independent value means tearing it out of its original source. In this case, the intellect alone is not enough to solve problems.[555]

It is because of their replacement of *sunnah* with rational values that this school of thought adopts views prevalent in our days such as '*hadith*s have been collected and written in the third century AH; and not everything has been preserved in its originality.'[556] This thought has been accepted by some modern Muslim intellectuals who follow *Mu'tazilite* line as the foundation of their thought system. Although he values rational thoughts, Gülen defines these interpretations and

[554] M.Fethullah Gülen, *Yaşatma İdeali* (*The Ideal Of sustentation)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2012).p,73.
[555] Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri 3(Emerald Hills of the Heart)*.p, 211–214.
[556] *Yol Mülahazaları,(Contemplating the Journey) Prizma(Prism) 6*.p,188.

approaches as 'neo-*Mu'tazilah*.'[557] By considering rational thought as valuable, Gülen demonstrates a relative proximity to the *Mu'tazilah* school; however, he differs from *Mu'tazilah* on the point of seeing intellect as the final arbiter and discarding the *sunnah*. In contrast to *Mu'tazilah*, he places intellect as a value next to the *sunnah*.

Especially at this point, he draws attention to an important issue. By the time *Mu'tazilah* put forth their views on *hadith*, *hadith* collections had already been sifted and criticised using scientific methods by *hadith* scholars—in a way that leaves no room for objection—and published in large volumes of books. As the time when the *Mu'tazilah* views developed coincides with the period the *hadith* works were taking place, as mentioned by Gülen, the *Mu'tazilah* arguments are answered by this concurrence. Therefore, *Mu'tazilah* follows a different path while the *sunnah* preceded them. This is akin to substituting *sunnah* with different considerations and, naturally, gives rise to questions about the integrity of their views. Why search for a different way in spite of *sunnah*? Is the reason behind this situation mistrust or lack of confidence in *sunnah*, or instituting a new thought system? Analysing the views of this school of thought is outside the scope of this thesis. The subject matter here is the criticism directed at the *sunnah* by this school's conception. It is possible to see the followers or sympathisers of this school involved in the criticism of *sunnah* in our days. In fact, their views appear to be unchanged since the beginning and they are steadfast in their opinions. The present day followers of this school must be questioned about this solid resoluteness and how this thought has been preserved. The explanation they may give to the preservation of their views in the course of the history would, through a similar rationale, explain the preservation of the *sunnah* by a similar recording process.

[557] ibid.

Gülen clarifies this point by his remark, 'however, objections to *hadith* and *sunnah* are nothing more than efforts to confuse minds by repeating some outdated information (already determined as wrong) as original'.[558] Gülen's explanation suggests that certain happenings are put on the agenda on purpose to keep them alive. Gülen stresses that certain Muslim intellectuals take *hadith* criticisms believing they are new, make them the subject matter of their books and give rise to doubts and suspicions about the *sunnah*. Yet, most of the objections they take as their source of reference were answered during the time of Ibn Qutaybah (d. 889 CE) with theses and incongruous claims refuted as they were put forth.[559] Based on this information, Gülen puts forward his own thesis, asserting that *Mu'tazilah*, *Murji'ah* and *Mushabbihah* prepare the groundwork for lies about *hadith*. According to him, those who attribute lies against the companions, their followers and the generation that followed them by claiming that *hadith* were not written down during the time of the Prophet are—without realising—taking part in *hadith* criticism and acting like *hadith* critics' representatives. Thus Gülen goes further and says that they fall into lies and academic plagiarism.[560] Looking from a rational point of view, in a situation where the companions and their followers are criticised and information coming through this channel are negated, what kind of religious source of reference can be considered healthy? The Qur'an, for example, with all the arguments about whether it was created or not, was also made a subject of debate during that time. In the case of the *sunnah* being negated, the whole value system established by Islam will have to be presented as a dead culture. At this juncture, critics can be seen in conflict with values the Qur'an and *sunnah* may offer for the present and future eras.

[558] ibid. 190.
[559] ibid. 191.
[560] M. Fethullah Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 543–544.

Further, Gülen draws attention to some *hadith* critics other than the followers of *Mu'tazilah*. In his view, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab (1701-1793 CE), besides his weakness in *hadith* knowledge, is of those who exceeded the limits in criticising early period Muslim scholars. A careful study of his books reveals that 'Abd al-Wahhab has drawn heavily—in the form of abridgement—on authors like Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Kathir, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah and Shawkani, and cherry-picked *hadith* to serve his purpose. Those who are influenced by his views consider many acts of *sunnah*, such as visiting graves, reciting *surah al-Fatihah* for the dead and using prayer beads as *shirk*.[561] Their approach to *sunnah* may be regarded as shallow rather than completely rejecting the *sunnah*.

According to Gülen, Muslim intellectuals blindly follow their imam (*taqlid*), are unacquainted with the fundamental sources of *hadith* and consequently their knowledge in this discipline is next to nothing. For this reason, they have no idea about the *hadith* discipline, the criteria employed in relevant works and stages accomplished in the choice of *hadith*—such as subjecting *hadith* to stringent tests from textual and chain of narration points of view.[562] Moreover, they do not feel the need to study works authored against *hadith* criticism. Whereas, works like Zaheed al-Kawthari's (1879-1952) *Maqalat* or Mustafa Sabri's *Mawqif al-'aql wa al-'ilm wa al-'alam min Rabb al-'alamin* and some other new research papers and articles provide satisfactory information. These works produce sound evidence and shut all doors against *hadith* criticism.[563] Clearly, Gülen is keen in preserving his Ottoman heritage to refute *hadith* criticism. It is also worth noting that besides some rational and textual argument, some of his arguments go beyond them and seems religious or confessional in nature.

[561] Gülen, *Yol Mülahazaları, Prizma 6*.p, 149.
[562] ibid, 192.
[563] ibid. 149.

Gülen emphasises that some Muslim intellectuals' offensive statements like 'the Prophet also was a human-being, and naturally, he made mistakes,'[564] cannot be regarded as innocent. In his view, these remarks stem from condescending statements like 'they were human-beings, so we are,'[565] about Muslims jurists. Negative criticism is like fire—once it is started, no one can predict where it will stop. Defaming prominent *Sunni* scholars, like Abu Hanifah and Imam Shafi'i, would extend to the questioning of the companions and even the Prophet. Looking from this point of view, the Qur'an is being questioned with the help of the projection of this idea in our age and a spiritual breakdown in society effected with regard to faith.[566] For this reason, and based upon his concern that a small deviation may lead to a drastic heresy, Gülen feels the need to caution Muslim intellectuals and emend their thoughts. Clearly, Gülen is very sensitive but also quite apologetic to protect the innocence of the first Muslim generations.

As mentioned above, Gülen approaches thoughts about the *sunnah* using psychological analysis and exposes the claimants' mental situation. He asserts that this approach stems from a lack of knowledge and, consequently, falling into an identity crisis. He explains that Muslim intellectuals attempt to question the *sunnah* because of this identity problem.[567] In fact, Gülen points out, in this questioning of the *sunnah*, they compare themselves to reputable Muslim scholars because of their lack of knowledge. Setting themselves as the standard of the truth, they declare some authentic *hadith* 'weak' without taking into consideration early period Muslim scholars' judgments.

[564] M.Fethullah Gülen, *Prizma (Prism) 2* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 64.
[565] ibid.
[566] ibid.
[567] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.(*The Messenger of God: Muhammad*) p, 411.

At this point, to further clarify the matter, I will focus on some *sahih hadith* evaluations to which certain non-Muslim thinkers and Muslim intellectuals objected. Taking into account the originality of the *hadith* subjected to criticism and their agreement with present day scientific realities, the appropriateness of Gülen's evaluations and advice can be understood. With his comments on *hadith*, Gülen presents some answers and brings scientific explanations to arguments, which opponents use as material for their criticism. For example: Gülen focuses on a *hadith*—reported by Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Da'wud, Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and Ibn Hanbal—through which the Prophet addresses a health issue that throws light on present day medical facts. The *hadith* in question is: 'The purification of the vessel of one of you, if a dog licks it, is to wash it seven times, the first time with soil.' Some variations of this *hadith* go like this: 'When a dog drinks from your vessel…'[568] with the influence of rationalist thought, this *hadith* has been rejected by some Muslim intellectuals who considered its content irrational. Gülen indicates that Abu Hurayrah's name being mentioned in the chain of narration is the primary reason for the rejection of this *hadith*. He opines that the name of this narrator triggers an automatic reflex to take an opposing stand. Looking into the evaluation of this *hadith* from Gülen's point of view, Hanafite jurists interpret the word 'seven' in the *hadith* as an allusion to 'multiplicity' and decide that washing the vessel three time would suffice.[569] Starting from this point, Gülen presents answers to the owners of thought who act impatiently from the medical science perspective. He builds his arguments on the basis of medical research and emphasises the existence of some diseases that can be transmitted from dogs to humans. In Gülen's view, this *hadith* indicates, in the name of hygiene and sanitation, the presence of viruses and microbes that can cause

[568] Bukhari, *Wudu'* 33; Muslim, *Taharah* 90-91; Tirmidhi, *Taharah* 68; Abu Da'wud, *Taharah* 37; Nasa'i,
Taharah 50; Ibn Majah, *Taharah* 31; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad* 2/245, 253, 460.
[569] Sarakhsî, *al-Mabsût* 1/48; Kâshânî, *Badâiu al-Sanâi'* 1/64; Marghinânî, *al-Hidâya* 1/23.

diseases in both dogs and people. This *hadith* proves itself to be a miraculous admonition and warning about these microbes' ability to survive comfortably in both bodies (dog and human). In this age, it is possible to come across numerous results and research papers in scientific publications.[570] Gülen's approach on issues pertaining to *hadith* of this kind is to refute the opponents' theses by giving answers based on their own tenets, i.e. rational and scientific data. By adopting this approach, he, on the one hand, draws attention to *hadith* interpretations applicable in present-day conditions and, on the other hand, gives examples, in a rational plan, from *hadith* collections to those who follow a thought system based on intellect and reason. Clearly, Gülen speaks the same language as his opponents.

Once again, Gülen responds through scientific arguments to denials raised against another *hadith*. In a *hadith* reported by Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet said: 'If a fly falls into the drink of any one of you, he should dunk it all the way in and then remove it.' The *hadith* continues, 'Because on one of its wings is disease and on the other is its cure.'[571] The literal meaning of the *hadith* is irreconcilable with intellect and reason. According to Gülen, *Mu'tazilah* criticises and rejects this *hadith* because of these rational reasons. For the same reasons, in our day, Gülen argues that Maurice Bucaille, who acted hastily in commenting and attributing defect to this *hadith*, failed in his view. The situation described in the *hadith* has been attributed to ignorance of Muslims and ridiculed. Again, the presence of Abu Hurayrah's name in the chain of narrators is the main cause of this reaction and the *hadith* has been logically rejected and derided. Gülen argues that criticising this *hadith* because of the chain of narrators is not possible because it is mentioned in many major *hadith* collections, such as Bukhari, Abu Da'wud, Nasa'i, Darimi and Ibn Hanbal. Besides, neither the

[570] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 481.
[571] Bukhârî, *tıp* 58; *badu'l-halq* 17; Abû Dâvûd, *at'ima* 48; Nasâî, *al-fara' va'l-atîra* 11; Ibn Mâja, *tıp* 31; Dârimî, a*t'ima* 12; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad* 2/229, 246.

companions nor *hadith* experts imply doubt about this *hadith*.[572] Emphasising the authenticity of the *hadith*, Gülen assures Muslims they should not have any suspicion in their mind.

Gülen makes some comments and scientific explanations about the characteristics of flies employing medical language. In the first part of the *hadith*, the Prophet draws attention to the microbe-carrying characteristic of the fly. The second part emphasises the presence of disease on one side of the fly and remedy on the other side. The term mentioned in the *hadith* 'side of the fly' (*janah*) refers to the wings. Modern research has brought to light that the fly carries a microbe on one side and a cytoplasm containing a sterilising agent on the other side.[573] Therefore, a hasty rejection of the *hadith*—without proper investigation—which throws light into modern day medical science, cannot be explained in any other way than the manifestation of prejudice. Moreover, this characteristic is not unique to the fly; it has been scientifically established today that the scorpion, honeybee and some species of snakes also have the same characteristic. Researchers need to evaluate the *hadith* in question from every aspect and then make their own comments. Bringing these kinds of arguments in defence of *hadith* through his style of approach, Gülen gives new dimensions to *hadith* criticism. Furthermore, establishing the strength and health of the *hadith* highlights the fact of its validity for all ages.

Gülen points out, as example, a particular *hadith* that was made a subject of mockery and rejected due to a lack of understanding of its import. At this point, he emphasises his opponents' lack of sensitive criteria for evaluation. Gülen says the Prophet saying, 'When one of you wakes up from sleep, he must not dip his hand into a utensil until he washes it three times, for indeed none of you knows where his hand

[572] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 482.
[573] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 482–484.

spent the night,'[574] has been made a subject of ridicule, especially by Goldziher and some Muslim intellectuals who follow him. Ahmad Amin (1886-1954)—the author of books *Fajr al-Islam, Duha al-Islam* and *Zuhr al-Islam*—ridicules this *hadith* by saying, 'How can a person not know where his hands were?'[575] Abu Rayyah also ridicules this *hadith* on the same basis. However, Gülen presents them answers through a distinct interpretation. Gülen argues that a sleeping person may scratch some parts of his body—including the private parts—due to some ailments, e.g. allergy, because the consciousness is partly closed down during sleep and movements of limbs cannot be controlled. The presence of millions of germs under the fingernails is a known fact of the medical science in our days. Unsurprisingly, a person who scratches any dirty part of their body will have those germs lodged under their fingernails and touching food without washing the hands will transfer these germs first to the food then into the body, potentially causing diseases. A *hadith* or warning—which is not contradictory to scientific findings—being rejected due to being reported by the companions who lived in a period where medical science was not so advanced is a serious predicament for some Muslim intellectuals.[576] Faced with modern scientific data, this situation causes them to fall into psychological guilt.

As can be seen, Gülen stands against the flat out rejection of *hadith* based on prejudice or without proper investigation of all their aspects relevant to our time. Emphasising their difficulty in explaining *hadith*'s compatibility with modern data, Gülen argues that these rejections are no more than mere repetition of old objections without any serious underlying research. With this aspect, Gülen advises the thesis owners to thoroughly investigate the said *hadith* and their sources to avoid an embarrassing situation vis-à-vis modern scientific data.

[574] Bukhari, *Wudu* 26; Muslim, *Taharah* 87-88; Abu Da'wud, *Taharah* 50; Tirmidhi, *Taharah* 19 (text from Abu Da'wud).
[575] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 488.
[576] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 488–489.

With his examples, Gülen offers Muslim intellectuals comments based on current scientific data. The dominance of psychological, sociological and scientific comments in Gülen's analyses demonstrates his ability in keeping with the spirit of the contemporary age. Through these kinds of interpretations, he brings *hadith* closer to present day understanding and reveals their compatibility with scientific data. This may be perceived as his unique teaching and persuasion method.

Gülen believes there is an intended target and design to be achieved by *hadith* criticism in the Muslim world. Through his analyses he concludes that questioning the primary sources of the religion, i.e. *hadith* and *sunnah*, prepare the groundwork for the spread of various ideologies. He argues that discrediting the *sunnah* would leave the Qur'an alone and exposed to free-hand interpretations. Ultimately, this would create a vacuum of faith—a fertile environment for the development of diverse ideologies. The fact is that human nature (*fitrah*) does not accept a vacuum. According to Gülen, strict communism was an alternative offered to fill a gap, but failed because it was not compatible with natural human disposition. Besides this, thought movements like spiritualism, evocation and reincarnation are also being propagated. At this point, Gülen reacts to Muslims intellectuals who are caught up with these currents and their efforts to inject them into Islam, and emphasises that what they are doing is not compatible with Islamic sources and a scholarly approach. He stresses the difficulty of understanding their persistent questioning and criticism of the *sunnah*.[577]

As understood from Gülen's assessments, *hadith* criticism creates suspicions on *sahih hadith* and gives rise to debates about *hadith* criteria. He does not believe that *hadith* critics have any chance to arrive to a positive outcome due to their lack of

[577] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu Sonsuz Nur 2*.p, 388.

knowledge and wrong psychological approach. Instead, the most valuable contribution they could make in this era would be the protection and dissemination of the huge amount of information so far collected in the field of *hadith*, using all available means and techniques. In other words, *hadith* literature, which has been recorded and safeguarded through traditional methods since the early period, must be transformed into a digital environment. Digital data on the internet facilitates rapid and widespread dissemination of information. As much as various events taking place in the world affect each other in some way, scientific progress and research also interact and huge amounts of information are shared rapidly on a global scale.[578] At this point, according to Gülen, it is essential to leave the job to the experts. Gülen, despite the fact he has been studying *hadith* with post-graduate students for more than 30 years, states he has mastered only one-twentieth of this discipline. In his view, the discipline of *hadith* is not a branch of science one can claim to have mastered just by saying so.[579] *Hadith* is a field of knowledge, which requires exceptional scientific depth. Criticising *hadith* by shallow considerations will not suffice to achieve correct results.

Gülen supports his views in the defence of *hadith* by basing them on a Prophetic tradition:

> There will be a man to whom my hadith will reach him, while he is sitting comfortably, and he will say between me and you is the book of Allah, whatever we find in it that is halal we will make it halal, and whatever we find in it haram we will make it haram. Then the Prophet says: whatever the messenger of Allah has made haram is as if Allah has made it haram.[580]

According to Gülen, the *sunnah* is just this in the sight of God and the Prophet. To those Muslims intellectuals who criticise and degrade the *sunnah* despite this *hadith* and their insufficient knowledge of Arabic language and to those who attempt to bring

[578] Fethullah Gülen, *İnsanın Özündeki Sevgi*, (*Love and Mercy)* vol. 16 (Istanbul: Da Publishing, 2003).p, 195.
[579] Gülen, *Yol Mülahazaları (Contemplating the Journey)Prizma 6*.p, 150.
[580] Tirmidhi, *'Ilm*, 10; Abu Da'wud, *Sunnah*, 5; Ibn Majah, *Muqaddimah*, 2.

solutions to all issues only by the help of a Qur'an translation, Gülen asks this question: 'Where do you think are you going?'[581] The Qur'an cannot stand alone without *sunnah* and neither can the *sunnah* stand without the Qur'an – they complement each other. If this fact is disregarded, deriving correct knowledge from either of these two sources would be impossible. Gülen's proposal with regard to the *fiqh* council can be considered also for safeguarding and defending original *hadith*. Such a scholarly committee to be formed at global level can produce satisfactory answers to all questions and criticisms raised against *sunnah*.

Chapter Four: Gülen's usage and interpretation of *sunnah*

Gülen's application of *sunnah* in his own life

Gülen's level of knowledge in the field of *sunnah* has been explained in his cognition of *sunnah* section. At this point, the practical aspect of his *hadith* knowledge and how this shaped his lifestyle will be expounded. How much of his knowledge of *hadith-sunnah* reflects on his daily life? What is his *sunnah*-centred representation of the message of Islam and self-accountability, and how does it affect social life? Seeking answers to these questions may reveal valuable ideas and information about Gülen's life and his mission.

Being closely related to this subject, it is appropriate to have a brief discussion on the relationship between *iman* (faith) and *'amal* (practice, worship) in Islam. These two elements constitute complementary aspects of Islam. That is, a human being can attain the level of perfection through the agency of knowledge-faith and good deeds. Once faith comes into the heart, a believer seeks ways to become a true servant and closeness to the Creator as a necessity of their faith. This idea is the natural result of the cause-and-effect relationship between knowledge, faith and worship. The human

[581] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p, 593–594

intellect reaching the knowledge of its Creator through the teachings of prophets looks into practical, individual and social events with the eyes of these prophetic teachings. The aim is to achieve the perfection required by the Creator. In the Islamic concept, the way to perfection (becoming a mature, perfect human being) is through applying the rules stipulated by Divine decrees and moral values into practical life. For this reason, a proper understanding of the values concerning morality and worship is closely related to adherence to prophets who represent these values. The Prophet confirmed this by saying, 'I was sent to complete the good morality.'[582] The Qur'an also draws attention to this characteristic of the Prophet.[583]

Many researchers such as Canan highlight Gülen's sensitivity on this matter. Therefore, it is inconceivable to think he would disregard knowledge, practice and religious principles. A quick look into the works he authored or his talks that have been compiled into book form reveals how much emphasis he puts on *sunnah*, worship—and especially the pillars of Islam, such as daily ritual prayers, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage—and the level of his sensitivity on morality and character.

Worship in Islam is an element of the religion that comes immediately after knowledge and faith, and occupies an important place in Gülen's life. He perceives this as perfect servitude. According to him, there exists a mystery of servitude (*sirr ubûdiyyah*) in inclining to God (*tawajjuh*), worship and prayers. Believers may not understand the true meanings attributed to these values, but act with the consciousness of servitude and perform these duties simply because they are ordered by God.[584] In Gülen's view, the factor that brings a human being to this level of consciousness is nothing less than the Qur'an. The Prophet, through his *sunnah*, is the representative of

[582] Muwatta, *Husn al-Hulq*, 8; Ahmad b. Hanbal, 2/381.
[583] "You are surely of a sublime character, and do act by a sublime pattern of conduct." (Qur'an, 68:4)
[584] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*. p, 31.

the Qur'an. Thus, loyalty to God and His Prophet manifests itself as a philosophy of life in Gülen.

Looking with this understanding in mind, worship, according to Gülen, is practising one's religion for the sake of God without expecting anything in return. He bases his understanding of obligatory and optional duties on this principle. Furthermore, Gülen maintains that, not only the obligatory duties, but also the principles related to individual, familial and social life have a devotional aspect. For this reason, a servant attains pure servitude by connecting the flow of his everyday life to devotional considerations. Gülen uses Said Nursi's thoughts to support this view.[585] According to Nursi, 'If a person performs his everyday tasks for the pleasure of God, and adheres sincerely to the Prophetic traditions—i.e. eats, sits, stands up like him and takes him as a role model in all his routines—he will have converted his habits into worshipping.'[586] Due to his total agreement with this view, Gülen's life manifests as a system that is full with reflections from the *sunnah*. Gülen also believes Nursi's view stating the three major obstacles or enemies—i.e. ignorance, poverty and discord—that affect individual and community life may be overcome by adopting the faith and *sunnah* into people's daily lives. This is the reason why he accepts individual and family education as the primary element in social development. He attaches a particular importance to school education for the cultivation of the members of the society.[587] He considers this as a form of devotional thought in terms of adherence to the *sunnah*, because there exists a sampling of educational processes in the Prophet's life, which began in Mecca and evolved into a formal school status in Medina. It is

[585] Gülen, *Kırık Testi-1(The Broken Jug)*.p, 31–32.
[586] Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Flashes Collection*, 11. Flashes First Point (Istanbul: Sozler Publishing, 2006).p, 64.
[587] İsmail Albayrak, *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times Fethullah Gülen as an İslamic Scholar*, ed. Zeki Sarıtoprak, Fethullah Gülen and His Theology of Social Responsibility (Clifton, NJ: Blue Dome Press, 2012).p, 91.

possible to see many examples of one-to-one interaction and individual training in the Prophetic *sunnah*.

For this reason, not contending himself with defending the *sunnah*, Gülen puts his focus on practical interpretations of the *sunnah*. The priority in this context, according to him, is to attain maturity and perfection in worshipping and *tajdid* (renewal). Highlighting the role of worship in training individuals, he focuses on cultivating a model community. Keeping his emphases at the highest level on this issue, he encourages individuals to bring vitality to their worship. He often says:

> In fact, we are experiencing fatigue in our servitude. There are virtually fatigue and frustration in our devotion. We are looking into Islam vulgarly. We are narrowing and shallowing it in our hearts. We have become the victims of acquaintances. Our values have become dull in our eyes; they do not create a stir anymore. Why there is no excitement?[588]

Gülen emphasises that each individual should look for this renewal in the liaison between his Lord and his own self, because any form of renewal not starting from this point would not be a *tajdid* in its true sense. Gülen sees devotion not just in terms of formal injunctions, but rather an ontological issue, and for this reason, places them on top of the list of individual and social revival. Believing that current perceptions of worship are completely built upon routines, Gülen criticises contemporary Muslims with very harsh language. He believes that modern Muslims have failed to internalise the truths of the Qur'an and *sunnah*, and this is why faith and worship have been perceived shallowly as traditions and customs inherited from the family. Shallowness in thought, knowledge and faith can be counted as some of the reasons behind this failure, which hinder the understanding of the essence of worship. For example, the issue that the Qur'anic verse 'When they rise to do the Prayer, they rise lazily,'[589] deals with is employed by Gülen according to a rather different argument. According

[588] Gülen, *Kırık Testi-1(The Broken Jug)*.p, 36.
[589] Qur'an 4:142.

to Gülen, worship that is not genuinely internalised can turn, in time, into fatigue, boredom and laziness, and loses its original purity.[590] Consequently, a serious degeneration emerges in society due to religious values losing their effect. In this case, the survival of the society becomes difficult.

In this environment of corruption, Gülen judges individuals by their devotional aspect. He analyses the perfect human portrait psychologically on the criteria of sincerity in devotion. In his analyses, he does not neglect giving examples from the *sunnah* and providing new perspectives upon it. . According to Gülen, prayer is a human behaviour. It is a Divine command shaped particularly for human beings. Its form and essence were taught to the Prophet personally by Gabriel.[591] From this point of view, the ritual aspect of prayer has a Divine origin. Prayer—due to these characteristics—should be performed as best as it can be in the human dimension. Gülen perceives the performance of prayers without proper consciousness as an escape from duty. This escape from sincere worship may also be seen as running away from other responsibilities in life. Failure in internalising Divine commands may reflect in one's life as an inadequate development of the sense of individual responsibility. He presents these inferences by way of new interpretations he introduced into *hadith*. In his view, if worship is not performed in its peculiar spiritual atmosphere, the formal postures and acts are considered outside natural human behaviour.[592] That is, they turn into instinctive animal movements.

Starting from this point and drawing attention to similes in *hadith*, Gülen presents contemporary Muslims with the reality and essence of prayer. For example,

[590] Gülen, *Kırık Testi-1*.p, 43.
[591] Muslim, *Janaidh*, 1; Tirmidhi, *Imam*, 18; *Jihad*, 32; Suyuti, *Miftah*, 29; *Musnad*, II, 85, 160; Bukhari, *Adab*, 28; Muslim, 1, 140; Abu Davud, *Manasiq*, 24, 27; Tirmidhi, *Hajj*, 14; Abu Dawud, *Salat*, 2; Bukhari, *Badu'l-Halq*, 6; Abu Dawud, *Sunnah*, 9; *Musnad*, I, 191; Ibn Hihsam, *Sira*, III, 101–102.
[592] Gülen, *Kırık Testi-1*.p, 43–44.

the condition of a worshipper who moves into the bowing position (*ruku'*) before the imam has been described as: 'would you like God to turn your faces into that of a donkey's when you are rising from *ruku'*?'[593] In the context of *hadith,* moving in anticipation of the imam's movements means going out of the line of servitude. Here, it is possible to infer that Gülen, by pointing out the obedience to *ulu al-amr* (authorities) as required by individual and social morality, communalises devotions and establishes rules in community training. Continuing again, it is said, 'When one of you goes into *sajdah* (prostration) position, you should not do it like a rooster picking the grain.'[594] This has also been interpreted as an animal behaviour. The worshipper is being invited to live the feeling and cordiality while performing prostration. Explanation of the wisdom behind prostration by 'not sitting on the haunches like a dog'[595] during the prayer, implements paradigms to prevent vulgarisation of individuals.

Gülen emphasises that an individual can only achieve progress in human values parallel to the level of his contact with God, because one of the characteristics of the Divine laws is to directly affect people's behaviours and lives. This can be seen as conforming with the view asserting that religion represents material and spiritual integrity.

The abovementioned *hadith* highlights the characteristics of a human being during worship and differentiates between the human on the one hand, and the animal that has no intellect or judgment on the other. While inviting people to an orderly social life, it also builds a solid and healthy value system for the community. In a way, it puts forth the thesis that worship is the most prominent difference between humans

[593] ibid.
[594] ibid.
[595] ibid.

and other living creatures, thus justifying humans' worthiness of being subject to Divine addressing.

Süleyman Sargin describes Gülen's worship consciousness as in perfect accordance with the target set in the above *hadith*. He connects Gülen's sensitivity on worship to his proper interpretation of the *sunnah* and the Prophet. In Gülen's view, *sajdah* represents the pinnacle of worship and is the ground for thanking God for the gifts and revenue that come with prayer.[596] Gülen also interprets the state of *sajdah* as the summit of convergence with prayer.[597] His comment on the following Qur'anic verse with regard to the Prophet's way of performing his prayer gives tips on Gülen's worship consciousness:

> He Who sees you when you rise (in the Prayer, and in readiness to carry out Our commands), As well as your strenuous efforts in prostration among those who prostrate (to be able to fulfil your duty of servanthood and help the believers to reform their lives).[598]

According to him, this verse—besides describing how the Prophet prays—explains the reality of perfect devotion. Thus, Gülen concludes that—as mentioned in the *hadith*[599]—Muslims are responsible to perform their prayers exactly the same way the Prophet did.[600] For this reason, a self-accountability that questions Gülen's personal worship is perceived. Stressing frequently the expression of gratitude to God through worship for all the blessings He bestowed upon us, he advises a perpetual intellectual and devotional vivacity.[601] The modality should reflect this inner sincerity on the outward appearance and the *hadith* points out this aspect of the worship. A devotion

[596] Süleyman Sargın, "Namazı sanki secde etmek için kılıyor," *Zaman Newspaper* 4.October.2013.
[597] Gülen, *Kırık Testi-1*., 48.
[598] Qur'an 26:218–219.
[599] "When you pray, do as you see me praying." (Bukhari, *Adhan*, 18; *Adab*, 27; Darimi, *Salat*, 42; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, 5/53.)
[600] Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla 1*.p, 61.
[601] ibid., 86.

performed at this level of consciousness would normally represent the purpose of the creation.[602]

The perfection in servitude finds its place with superior Divine values and *sunnah* offered by Islam. Through these values, the Creator shows the nurturing method to individuals. For this reason, Gülen mainly focuses on the nurturing and devotional aspect of *sunnah*. He endeavours to have the nurturing function of devotion work at individual and community levels. For this reason, he begins with questioning his own self. He focuses on the scarcity of his own worship and the qualitative deficiency of his inner-formation vis-à-vis God's power of creation.[603] By his comments, Gülen draws attention to the material and spiritual substance of worship and highlights the necessity of addressing the issue in a holistic manner. According to him, in worship, matter and spirit are in a position where they cannot be distinguished from one another.

Gülen interprets modality related metaphors mentioned in the *hadith* as the causes of disorders in physical behaviours and, thus, lack of discipline in life. In fact, he draws attention to the correlation between the physical body and soul. Between body and soul there exists an uninterrupted liaison that can be felt and sensed by experience. A disorder or discipline in the physical body has a similar effect on the soul. As a negative thought system can cause anxiety and stress, positive plans, projects and worship lead to development of the soul.[604] While these thoughts and behaviours somehow affect the soul, at the same time, they become instrumental in forming and clarifying human nature. The modality mentioned in the *hadith* points out the soul, although it appears to be related to outward appearance. Corruption of the inner being is thus reflected on outward appearance and this has been compared in

[602] ibid., 99.
[603] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* p, 497.
[604] Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri 3*.(*Emerald Hills of the Heart)* p, 219–220.

form to animal behaviours. Conversely, the outward deformation and resemblance to an animal may be seen as the cause of a serious degeneration of the inner being. Thus, the *hadith* deals with man's inward-outward unity and educates him. Otherwise, looking at man from only one aspect would be similar to the situation of an aeroplane with only one wing.

Believing that a believer's psychology of guilt and sin in individual and family life can be overcome by prayer, Gülen explains his thesis by *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from God). According to him, the prescribed prayer—as mentioned in many *hadith*—is a means of purification from sins, because prayer is an effective factor in evolving repentance into a state of consciousness. That is, a prayer that is performed according to its prescribed manner acts is a leavening agent of consciousness to an individual.[605] Because of this state of consciousness, individuals can heal themselves psychologically and attain a state of grace.. A careful study of Gülen's works discloses that his sensitivity about prayer is also valid for each and every truth revealed by the Qur'an and *sunnah*. According to him, no form of worship has any superiority over another in terms of practising devotion and adherence to the *sunnah*. All forms of worship and values of the prophetic traditions have their own weight relative to their status.

Besides worship, Gülen approaches the Prophet's actions from two different points: *tabligh* (delivery of the Divine message) and *tamthil* (representation, setting himself up as a role model). As mentioned by his wife 'A'ishah, the Prophet, through his actions, put into practical life the superior morality the Qur'an brought to mankind. The Muslim community was ordered with adherence to the *sunnah* because of this reality of representation.[606] This is why Gülen emphatically advises the *sunnah*

[605] Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla 1*.p,162.
[606] Qur'an, 4:59; 33:36; 59:7; 16:44–64; 3:31–32.

to become a way of life. According to him, the verse 33:21 points directly to the Prophet's representative mission.[607] It is because of these reasons that Gülen, on account of his mission, ascribes the upbringing of future generations to a *sunnah*-centred representative ability. Therefore, he focuses on the generations (alperen) to bring, by representation, what they believe into life, because the dullness would be removed by means of representation from Islamic understanding and its original purity reinstated. Generations with these qualities will be able to perform their mission of 'bringing peace and harmony to humanity.'[608] Gülen, who firmly believes in this, emphasises that *tamthil* in the Prophet's mission had priority and importance over *tabligh*—as he says in his own words, 'always one step ahead of the *tabligh* circumstance.'[609] According to him, with his representative ability, the Prophet constitutes a role model for humankind. Thus, the Prophet gave priority to the representation of the Qur'anic verses over their delivery; that is, put *tamthil* one step ahead of *tabligh*.[610] Briefly, for Gülen, understanding of *sunnah,* internalising the values in it and finally practicing it is a project of civilisation. In Gülen's thought, not only Muslims but all humankind needs *sunnah* oriented life.

Muslims' failure in interpreting and representing the Qur'an and *sunnah* properly may be counted among the reasons for their falling behind in certain areas, because Muslims were seen to rise during the times when their representative ability reached the highest level. For example, progress was successfully sustained during the time of the Prophet and the rightly guided caliphs,[611] and in some other Muslim states that followed.[612] This progress trend in Islam can be interpreted as the result of adherence to the principles of *istiqamah* (steadfastness, acting rightly) in

[607] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 107.
[608] ibid.
[609] ibid.
[610] ibid., 107–108.
[611] Caliphs after Prophet Muhammad who are Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman and Ali
[612] M.Fethullah Gülen, Gülen, *Prizma 4*.p, 81.

representation.[613] Upholding steadfastness is a quality that can maintain the vivacity in representation. At this point, putting his focus on *tamthil* and *istiqamah*, Gülen exposes his own self-accountability. He concentrates on the questions of 'how' and 'why' with regard to the failure in representing Islam.[614] He presents the way out of the problem and the means of achieving the aim by inculcating his interlocutor with inner accountability along with *tamthil* and *istiqamah*.

With these considerations, Gülen points out the qualities of a genuine believer and draws a picture of his representative ability. He discusses the views that the believer is under God's control in their attitude and behaviour. So, as he points out, caution and vigilance constitute indispensable principles of life.[615] Gülen implements serious strict disciplinary measures in the application of *sunnah*; he draws attention to the significance of these characteristics in the training and education of the target generation. In defining and executing these implementations, Gülen has not neglected drawing disciplinary principles directly from *sunnah*.

In light of this information, drawing attention to another matter, a true *murshid* (Sufi teacher) and guide—even though they are well-equipped on the horizon of *'ilm-ma'rifah* (knowledge-intuitive knowledge of God)—must take into account their audience's level of cognisance, thoughts and feelings when speaking or writing.[616] This will help avoid any confusion or misunderstanding in the mind of their interlocutor. This approach of Gülen's conforms with the Prophet's *hadith,* 'Speak to people according to their level of understanding, and not your level of knowledge.'[617]

[613] Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla 3*.p, 76.
[614] Gülen, *Kırık Testi-1*.p, 118–119.
[615] M.Fethullah Gülen, *Kalp Ibresi(The Heart's Cursor)*(Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 94.
[616] ibid., 28.
[617] Al-Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadr*, Egypt, 1356, v. III, p. 378/ v. IV, 299; Abu Nu'aym al-Asfahani, *Hılyat al-Awliya'*, Beirut, 1405, v. II, s. 300; Ibn Hajar Abu al-Fadl al-Askalani al-Shafi'i, *Lisan al-Midhan*, Beirut, 1406/1986, v. VI, p. 274.

He takes moderation and gradualism as his principle and shows, once again, his strict adherence to the Prophetic *sunnah*.

Gülen also points out the importance of *tabligh*, which is a dimension of *tamthil*. While highlighting this aspect of Gülen's, Unal draws attention to his life being intertwined with *sunnah*. Unal takes some examples from the Qur'an and *sunnah* to support his view about this quality of Gülen's. He explains the Prophet's stress about people's unwillingness in entering in Islamic faith by the Qur'anic verse, 'Yet it may be that you (O Muhammad) will torment yourself to death with grief, following after them, if they do not believe in this Message.'[618] The verse expresses the Prophet's eagerness in making people accept his message. On one hand, the verse highlights the Prophet's compassion and, on the other hand, he is cautioned about his eagerness. The Prophet is not responsible for people's faith; his mission is just to deliver the message. After these examples, Ünal points out Gülen's eagerness in adopting the *sunnah*. According to Ünal, Gülen views the Prophet's eagerness as the pinnacle of the mission's understanding and representation. Therefore, Gülen sets the *sunnah* as his target. It is possible to say that Gülen has been influenced by his contemporary's commentaries and developed a new thought system for his own commentaries, because Gülen frequently uses Nursi's works as his source of reference and recommends his followers also to do so.

His criteria for Selection and Usage of *Hadith*

The main theme of this section is Gülen's priorities and criteria for selection, usage and presentation of *hadith*; what type of *hadith* he selects and for what purpose he uses them in his works? Answers to these questions will provide important

[618] Qur'an 18:6.

information about Gülen's dialogue with *sunnah* and the objective he wants to achieve.

Science and faith-based action

Gülen's energetic character may be a good starting point to arrive at the right conclusion on this matter. With his thought and vision, he displays the characteristic of a man of action. However, it is necessary to emphasise that the term 'action' here should not be understood in the sense of *jihad* or similar activities. Nowadays, *jihad* is being brought to the fore as an action in the name of Islam; values such as faith, contemplation, affection, tolerance and dialogue are left in the background.

According to *Gülen*, action, unlike physical reactions, is a person's ability to engage in the ontological analysis of existence and to read the book of the universe in detail. Regarding the study and understanding of the universe, he accepts as his guide the Prophet, and his *sunnah*, who encourages[619] his followers to seek knowledge.[620] This approach of Gülen demonstrates a close relation with the command of the first Qur'anic verse revealed, 'Read!'[621] Reading results in thinking, analysis and synthesis. The very first verse of the Qur'an presents the universe in a book form and leaves its analysis to mankind. At this point, the Qur'an appoints the Prophet to the position of the delivery and representation of the message, and links the way to reach Allah to reading (reflection, analysis, study) and to the understanding of the Prophetic messages. Necip Fazil Kisakurek, at this juncture, demonstrates a similar approach to Gülen's and places the Prophet in a central position for the understanding of the book of the universe, and explains it as the main purpose of God's art.[622] It is difficult to

[619] 'Whoever goes out seeking knowledge is in the path of Allah until he returns.' Tirmidhi, *'Ilm* 2, (2649); Ibn Majah, *Muqaddimah* 17, (227).
[620] Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken 1(The Statue of Our Souls*).p,65.66.
[621] Qur'an, 96:1 'Read in and with the Name of your Lord, Who has created...'
[622] Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Çile*, vol. 18, Şiirlerim ve Şairliğim (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Publishing, February 1992).

talk about a very strong influence of Kısakürek on Gülen, however, it is also not difficult to say that there is no influence at all. According to Gülen's thought, the first step in faith is linked to thought based action. That is, the book of the universe (physics, astrophysics and other sciences) is being examined and synthesised in the shade of the *sunnah*. These two action-oriented thoughts deal with the thesis that man can reach the truth through reflection, discernment and analysis. For instance, Kisakurek voices that Allah—in order to be recognised and known—placed mankind in a faraway place, and put the universe, with all its knowledge and sciences, at their disposition.[623] And, Gülen appears to have taken this action-oriented spirit one step further in his personal life and mission.

From these approaches of Gülen's, it is possible to conclude that he is convinced that the world of the future will be shaped by thought, faith, knowledge and the spirit of action. For this reason, Gülen draws attention to the importance of the foundation stones being supplied by the *sunnah*. According to him, the architects of the future need to reinterpret the Book, *sunnah* and the legal opinions (*ijtihad*) of the pious predecessors (*salaf al-salihin*) in a manner consistent with the perception, style and understanding of the time by taking the advantage of the flexibility and universality of the religious-national dynamics.[624] Essentially, at the foundation of historical dynamics, a healthy society and scientific progress, lays the proper reading of these principles in accordance with the spirit of the time.

The rationality of knowledge, experience and research with Gülen is, in fact, hidden within these abovementioned dynamics. This means that a new impetus and energy will also be possible by the help of these dynamics. Inculcating aspiration and commitment to learning in individuals will be possible with the interpretation of the

[623] ibid.42
[624] Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken 1*.(*The Statue of Our Soul*) p,67.

sunnah in accordance with the necessities of the time. Therefore, he directly turns to the *sunnah* and starts analysing this key element. This is the reason why his samplings, analyses and comparisons are *sunnah*-related. Inspired by the *hadith*, 'Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge, Allah will make the path to paradise easy for them,'[625] he focuses on knowledge and tries to convince his interlocutor.[626] Mobilising the power of the *sunnah* behind him in order to achieve his goal, Gülen enters into a variety of presentations and defences. While showing thus the efficacy of the *sunnah*, he is actually aiming for a generation with the ability to think and analyse with it.

Gülen comes up with rather original comments on the abovementioned *hadith* in order to motivate his mission and followers. Thus he draws attention to 'following a path to seek knowledge' becoming more and more important for scientific researches. He is of the view that the achievement of successful decisions and interpretations by the architects of the future will depend on the proper analysis and knowledge of the global world, and on the reading and closely following of technological progress. Failure to understand and follow the scientific world, and inability to synthesise the obtained data, will result in certain losses for humanity. He believes in this reality and tries to convince his interlocutor of its existence.[627]

Gülen highlights the potential danger that in remaining isolated from the world, a researcher may consequently feel trapped in his own small reality and therefore limit his ability. Conversely, he believes that being informed of scientific developments would be promising for the progress of science and the future of humanity.[628] While emphasising that his educational mission—with the help of the

[625] Muslim, *Zikr* 38; Tirmidhi, *Hudud* 3, *Birr* 19, *Qira'ah* 3
[626] Gülen, *Kalp Ibresi*. *(The Heart's Cursor)* p, 239-240.
[627] ibid.245.
[628] ibid. 246.

above *hadith* and similar others—would result in new perspectives arising in Turkey, Gülen prepares the groundwork for expansions in diverse geographical parts of the world. Also, while he encourages knowledge seeking through these *hadith*s, he does not neglect the furnishing of finances to (or from) businessmen for the realisation of his mission. By adopting this method, he prefers to solve problems through education; he rightly believes that scientific progress depends on this, and likes to convince others of the same. Due to the same considerations, he points out the necessity of closely following those who exceed in scientific research and developments.[629] From this perspective, Gülen views scientific works and progress as a philosophy of life and as elements encouraging the study of *sunnah* and *hadith*.

It is beneficial here to draw attention to one particular quality of Gülen: in the selection of *hadith*, he generally leaves the secondary and theoretical matters out of his agenda. He considers these matters as belonging to the field of experts, *muhaddith*.[630] For example, works in the technical areas of *hadith* literature in modern period by Muslim experts such as Talat Koçyiğit, Ismail Lütfi Çakan, Muhammad Abu Zahw, Muhammad Mustafa al-A'zami, Mustafa Asim Koksal, Gurm Allah al-Dumayni, Subhi al-Salih, Ibrahim Canan et al. may be considered satisfactory—both quantitatively and qualitatively. However, the action-oriented aspect of *hadith* like reflection, faith and science/knowledge has not received due consideration. But in all honesty, works published in the fields of *hadith* methodology and terminology and their role in the defence of *hadith* cannot be ignored.

Belief and examples from *sunnah*

Gülen attributes a great importance to regaining the energy and action lost at individual and community level—most particularly the faith and spirituality element.

[629] Gülen, *Yenilenme Cehdi, (Endeavor for Renewal)Kırık Testi 12*.p, 94.
[630] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 93.

A revival and action at this point would result in other factors starting to progress. The first impetus and example for this is the *sunnah*, which was empirically tested, and the companions of the Prophet. According to Gülen, the first step the Prophet took during the Meccan period was faith-based action.[631] This action constitutes the first and the most important stage of rebuilding individuals and the community. This is establishing a new way of life and demonstrating human dignity. This is also the first step towards solving the problems amassed during the Age of Ignorance. The Prophet's one-to-one dialogues with individuals and solidarity between the faithful under all circumstances are the most salient feature of this period. At this point, Gülen also sets his focus on one-to-one education and the training of individuals. Looking at the mission represented by Gülen from this perspective, all that could be seen at the nascence of the movement were no more than a few students, a house and a dormitory. The objective was the individuals' education and training, and equipping them with material and spiritual action-oriented qualities, i.e. thought, faith, knowledge and delivery-representation. In this regard, the Meccan period of the Prophet's mission (*tabligh*) was taken as an example by Gülen. For instance, in drawing attention to the Prophet's compassion for his companions, he says 'Throughout his life, he did not close eyes once and had a comfortable sleep,'[632] and bring him to the present time as a role model. This way, Gülen endeavours to help make his interlocutor envisage the Prophet and his *sunnah*, and aims at intriguing a move in the spiritual life of the individual. Gülen compares the present day social structure with the Mecca period, and concludes that the method of dealing with the people of that time can be adopted in our days. This is because problems experienced in the area of faith in this age show a close resemblance with those that prevailed during the Meccan period. And this is the reason why Gülen sets his focus on the fact

[631] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-1*.p, 241.
[632] ibid.240.

that the solution needs to begin with 'faith.'[633] Therefore, for nurturing a dynamic community and individuals, he bases his *hizmet* philosophy on a faith system.[634] In brief, on the one hand Gülen theologises (kelamizes) *sunnah* at individual level, on the other hand, he socialises *sunnah* at community level.

Interest in every member of the community

Gülen considers paying attention to and meeting all layers of society—children, youth, elderly and leaders—as essential, and bases this view on narrations transmitted from 'Ali.[635] He draws attention to the Prophet who, in delivering his message, did not differentiate between the poor and the rich, and between ordinary people and intellectuals. Hence the Prophet based his mission on premises intended to eradicate the class difference in society in a de facto manner. Thus the Prophet recognises the human factor with all its realities and diversities (poor, rich, white, black, free, slave, uneducated, intellectual, etc.) as his partner. And he accepts equality between human-beings as a reality. This practice of the Prophet resulted in his speedy welcome among the lower classes in his society although he was still frowned upon by the higher classes.[636] With this approach, the Messenger of God proves that there is neither a cast system in Islam nor any kind of negative nationalism.[637] Starting from these criteria, Gülen turns towards the individual and community training system. He focuses on the material and spiritual equipment of the

[633] *Ümit Burcu,(The Bearing of Hope) Kırık Testi-4*.p, 131-133.
[634] Kate Kirk & Yusuf Alan Gurkan Celik, "Modern Ideals and Muslim Identity: Harmony or Contradiction? A Text Linguistic Analysis of Gülen's Teachings and Movement," (25. October. 2007), http://fgulen.com/en/gulen-movement/conference-papers/contributions-of-the-gulen-movement/25828-modern-ideals-and-muslim-identity-harmony-or-contradiction-a-text-linguistic-analysis-of-gulens-teachings-and-movement?highlight=WyJmYWl0aC1iYXNlZCJd&hitcount=0.
[635] The Prophet asked the leaders of Quraysh: 'Who among you is going to help me?' 'Ali placed on the ground the water pitcher he was holding and said: 'O Prophet of Allah! I am!' Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad* 1/159.
[636] Historical evidences show that these people who were considered as lower class learnt how to read and write in a short period of time and become role models for other communities.
[637] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-1*. 242.

new generation he had in mind, and endeavours to develop it to such a level so as to be accepted as a real role model.

He views the members of society—student, teacher, businessman, etc.—all together as a whole, and aims at the establishment of a strong bond of love between them. For this reason, he strives to meet the needs of people from all thoughts and beliefs,[638] and does this within a family environment in a way similar to the relationship between parents and children. Moving this core structure a little further, he views all nations of the world—Muslim or non-Muslim—, and their needs, as one big family. He bases the realisation of this objective on the action oriented *sunnah*, and puts forward the illustrious example of the Prophet's wife Khadijah's spending all her wealth for this cause.[639] Gülen chooses to use this core structure that he put together within Turkey as leaven for diverse nations and cultures. Besides this, another important point that should be highlighted is that, in Gülen's education and training method, it is essential to accept and respect every nation with their own socio-cultural values. The 'core structure' that is being offered for education and training is, in fact, to be established on the distinctive universal values of the nations. It is possible, in a way, to view this phenomenon as a mutual give-and-take process. This practice of Gülen's can also be considered as being based on the example of the Prophet's art of cohabitation with people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Staying away from expectations

Gülen cautions his followers particularly to stay away from all kinds of expectations while turning this mission into reality.[640] According to Gülen, the

[638] Cihan News Agency, "Gülen Offers Condolences for Slain İstanbul Resident Shot at Protest," *Today's Zaman* 24. May. 2014.
[639] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-1*. p, 241-267.
[640] *Vuslat Muştusu(Glad Tidings of a Reunion) Kırık Testi-8*.p, 68-69.

mission of representation remaining untainted from all suspicions and doubts is due to the Prophet's unwavering stance against temptations. Gülen points out that the Prophet's abstinence from expectation is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an: 'I ask of you no wage for that (for conveying God's Message); my wage is due only from the Lord of the worlds.'[641] This Qur'anic verse, in fact, clarifies the matter beyond any doubt. According to Gülen, as mentioned above, Khadijah, the Prophet's wife, spent all her wealth for the sake of his mission. However, the Prophet did not request anything from anyone—even from his wife—for his own self. During the migration from Mecca to Medina, he accepted the mount, which Abu Bakr prepared for him, only after he paid the cost of the animal.[642] With these inferences of his, Gülen, while protecting the representatives and the office of the representation from suspicions, actually offers them an exemplary ascetic life. Primarily, his personal decency stems from the *sunnah*, and he presents the *sunnah*—which he adopted as a lifestyle—as a means of treatment for diseases arising in this era.

Gülen imagines the same consciousness of non-expectation—which he endeavours to instil into individuals and the community—also for the administrative bureaucracy that represents the state. He emphatically highlights that greed and expectation would cause corruption and injustice in the governance, and, ultimately result in degeneration in the society.[643] Looking into this aspect, he imagines a secure and healthy social structure within the triangle of an individual-society-state. A social structure that achieves its maturity in this manner will certainly be able to continue strongly into the future.

[641] Qur`an 26:109
[642] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-1*.p, 267.
[643] *Yeşeren Düşünceler,(Blossoming Reflections) Çağ Ve Nesil -6* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p,105-107.

Gülen seeing the solution in the *sunnah* and his selection of *hadith*s to fit into this paradigm can be seen as an established disposition in him. His way of finding solutions in line with the *sunnah* to all problems, demonstrates a way of life hand in glove with *sunnah*. Therefore, his solving theological and other problems with ease within the Prophetic moral context should not be considered strange. In contrast to classical understanding of the status of *sunnah* which is primarily sources for jurists is not the way which Gülen follows. In other words, while classical scholars see the people who dealt with *sunnah* as pharmacist, the jurist were doctors. Gülen, however, sees the expertise of *sunnah* as a real doctorship. Within this mindset, solutions he offers for individual and social improvements are generally accurate. This situation may also be interpreted as the energy he receives from the *sunnah*. Otherwise, decline and corruption within individuals and the society is inevitable. This is the reason why a spirit based on faith and no expectation is one of Gülen's main objectives.

Hijrah dimension of the *sunnah*

Gülen designates new targets like *hijrah* to the individuals and the society that he wrought and moulded into consistency and coherence through the spirit of knowledge, belief, action, self-sacrifice and non-expectation. Therefore, he associates dynamic life and maintaining vigour to an altruistic philosophy of life. Using the migration rationale, he strives to explore ways to establishing bridges of dialogue between diverse cultures and nations. According to him, the companions' going out of the Arabian Peninsula during and after the time of the Prophet is one of the most striking examples to illustrate this. Migration from Mecca to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and Medina are the first examples of migration for the sake of religion in Islam. The Prophet's saying, '…he whose migration is for Allah and His messenger, his

migration is for Allah and His messenger…'[644] highlights specifically the pure intention in the migration.[645] With the energy he receives from these values, Gülen emphatically highlights the act of migration, and seeks to bring into present-day a vigour and vitality similar to that of the companions. This indicates that the *sunnah* can be adopted in the present-day with the same functionality. Therefore, he asserts that, in this day and age, the spirit of action accompanied with the companions' mentality—and without expectation—is and will realise the hijrah phenomenon.[646] Looking from this perspective, Gülen studies both periods (*'Asr al-Sa'adah* – 'Age of Happiness' and contemporary time) together, and, by comparing them highlights the similarities between the two. In this way, he proves that *hadith*s can be practised again in the light of the *sunnah*, and thus constitute a significant source of reference and a striking example of the Prophet's time. It is also important to note that Gülen's appeal to the companions and the prophetic traditions are very different from modern day salafi interpretation of Islam. Main difference lies in their contextualisation of this period. Shortly, while Gülen tries to bring early period of Islamic understanding with some amendments to today, the hardcore salafi approaches try to take contemporary Muslims to the early period of Islam without any change. Thus Gülen takes the early history and modern society into consideration while the salafis look at the issue quite ahistorical manner.

Examples of God consciousness (*taqwa*)-fear of God (*makhafat Allah*) and self-examination (*Muhasaba*) from *sunnah*

Gülen prefers to turn subjective belief into practice as much as he can through good deeds and representation. Starting from this fact, Gülen puts forth and attempts

[644] Bukhari, *Bad al-Wahy* 1; *Ayman* 23; Muslim, *Imarah* 155; Abu Da'wud, *Talaq* 10.
[645] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-1(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*. p,308.
[646] *Örnekleri Kendinden Bir Hareket,(A Movement with Inherent Exemplars) Çağ Ve Nesil-8* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p, 113.

to prove that the sense of God consciousness—which is an important factor in establishing public security as well as disciplining an individual's life—is a principle that can be applied into everyday life. According to him, mankind ontologically possesses a negative aspect which is open to evil temptations. This deleterious characteristic in humans—unless cultivated and disciplined—can cause anarchy and all sorts of other problems in society. Therefore, there is a need for a self-control mechanism to cultivate and discipline this destructive potential in human beings. At this point, Gülen focuses on the individual's mental-moral discipline, and tends to the one-to-one training of individuals. Although human cultivation is a long and difficult process, the yield is worthy, and no trace of anarchy can be seen in communities made of people well disciplined. Even though the deterrence of law can be reasonably effective to some extent, the loss of control after a certain point is unavoidable. At this juncture, Gülen selects certain recipes from the *sunnah* and proposes them for the establishment of public security and peace. According to him, God consciousness and fear of God is an important denominator in nurturing individuals. The person who represents this culminating point is none other than the Prophet himself. He knitted the concept of God consciousness in all his own attitudes and behaviours and in the lives of his companions.[647] And in this way, the Prophet protected every member of his community from unfair practices. When mentioning the deterrent effect of the fear of God against the oppressive potential in human-beings, Gülen uses an important *hadith* as evidence:[648] 'Two eyes will not be touched by Hellfire: An eye that cries from the fear of Allah, and an eye that spent the night in a guard post in the path of Allah.'[649] God's existence and His constant watching and questioning of human beings will restrain their tendency for wrong-doing. Eventually, a portrait of a

[647] *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-1(The Messenger of God: Muhammad)*.p, 572-573
[648] ibid.411
[649] Tirmidhi, *Fada'il al-Jihad* 12.

trustworthy human being—both in spirit and matter—will emerge. For this reason, Gülen draws the picture of the true believer as a person who firmly placed the faith in the heart, who is constantly in fear of God—like the companions of the Prophet—, resisting temptations, and questioning. Of course a society made of people with these qualities would be free from insecurity. Therefore, dignity and security will be established in the community in the light of the *hadith*, '…a rider will be able to travel from San'a' to Hadramawt fearing none but Allah […] and wolves against his sheep...'[650] As can be seen from this, Gülen uses constructively and decisively the *hadith'*s arguments in line with the exemplary way of life that he aims to establish.

Gülen asserts that there exists a direct link between protecting individual and state rights and the fear of God—and belief in the Hereafter—that lays the foundation for self-examination. An individual who has the habit of self-examination is less likely to be inclined to crime. In case of crime, his conscience would lead him to admission of his guilt. With serious moral training, the *sunnah* moulds an individual into a trustworthy human being and brings about a safe and secure society.[651] Gülen strives to prove the upbringing characteristic of the *sunnah* through certain examples from the time of the Prophet. A case in point is that of Ma'iz and a lady from the tribe of al-Ghamidiyyah who committed adultery and went to the Prophet and confessed their crime due to the fear of God and conscientious self-examination.[652] Although confessing this shameful act in front of the Prophet and the companions created an embarrassing situation, it is also possible to mention here an internalised faith. Based on this *hadith*, Gülen highlights a rather different point. He presents the repentance (*tawbah*) element as a moral norm, which has an important function in individual and

[650] Sahih al-Bukhari, 3426, 6544
[651] Gülen, *Enginliği Ile Bizim Dünyamız, İktisadi Mülahazalar*.(*Our World in Depth, Economic Contemplations)* p,310.
[652] Muslim, *Hudud,* 22; al-Shawkani, *Nayl al-Awtar,* VII, 95,109; al-Zayla'i, *Nasb al-Rayah,* III, 314

social life.[653] Through repentance, he shows ways to ward off the fear of hopelessness and loosing, points it out as a means of psychological healing. He particularly emphasises the corrective function of repentance.[654] Through these examples, Gülen illustrates the Prophet's progressive methodology and his step-by-step journey from a community of ignorance towards a civilised society made of individuals who became role models for generations to come.[655] He analyses the Prophet's putting forth and finalising all ways and methods of education with an amazing patience during a period of 23 years. He strives with great enthusiasm to bring to our days all aspects of portraits from the lives of the companions.

The global human portrait, which Gülen aims at through these examples, will represent the peace and security with all his qualities. That is, he is endeavouring to see and show others the human portrait described in the *hadith*: 'A true Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims stay safe.'[656] For this reason, he prefers to see the *sunnah* being adopted as a norm at all levels.

Some interpretations regarding women's issues

The *sunnah* in the historical process has been discussed and interpreted according to the needs and problems of each period. Therefore, some critical issues such as women's rights that require new interpretations can be examined by Muslim scholars under the lens of the *sunnah*: What is the status of women in different cultures? What kind of status does the *sunnah* give to women? These are the major questions that need to be addressed, and Gülen's comments will constitute the main theme of this chapter. Also the status of women in Islam is an issue that is most

[653] Gülen, *Kur'an'nın Altın İkliminde(In the Light of the Quran's Golden Climate)*.p,332.336.
[654] Fethullah Gülen, "Yolsuzluk," http://www.herkul.org/herkul-nagme/401-nagme-yolsuzluk/.
[655] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*.p,89.90.
[656] Bukhari ,*Iman* 4; Abu Da'wud, *Jihad* 2

frequently asked and criticised. Therefore Gülen`s views will be discussed and analysed in this chapter.

According to Gülen, the closed aspects of the *sunnah*—not yet opened—should be interpreted according to the needs of the time, but always within the framework of its fundamental principles. These interpretations are, in fact, a requirement of the modern age.[657] Reading the messages stemming from the *sunnah* and making inferences therefrom according to the context of the time would be a significant work. With the help of these new elucidations, some social events, uncertain issues and the needs of the modern era would be solved. Real, satisfactory and accurate interpretations in this area will re-establish the *sunnah's* value and trustworthiness; Hence, removing doubts and suspicions arisen about the *sunnah* will be possible.

After this brief introduction, it would be appropriate to look into some of the most discussed issues in our days from Gülen's perspective. Firstly, the issue of 'woman and her status in *sunnah*'—an issue, in a way, subject to the most debate and suspicion—will be discussed in the light of Gülen's approaches. Why does Gülen feel the need of defending the women's rights so persistently? What is really understood from *sunnah* with regard to equality between man and woman? What do the Qur'an and *sunnah* say about women's headscarf and polygamy? Gülen's comments about these issues are a subject of interest.

A proper understanding of the rights and status of women in all cultures, and their acceptance in social environments primarily depends on viewing the picture as a whole. Attempting to assess an existing situation without knowing the conditions before the change, and its positive and negative aspects, may lead to biased and

[657] Gülen, *Fikir Atlası, Fasıldan Fasıla* p,65.

inappropriate results. This necessitates looking into women's status in pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula and in other cultures. It is only in the light of this information that the value Islam attributes to women can be understood appropriately.

Women in pre-Islamic era

In the Arabian Peninsula during the Age of Ignorance, a woman's birth, childhood development and marriage were a complete tragedy. During that time, a girl's existence in the family was a burden, considered as a cause of shame, and, in certain areas, they were even buried alive as soon as they were born.[658] The Qur'an clearly explains this situation in the following verse:

> When any of them is given news of the birth of a girl, his face becomes overcast, and he is (as if choking inwardly) with suppressed anger. He hides himself from the people because of the evil (as he wrongly supposes it) of what he has had news of. (So he debates within himself) Shall he keep her with dishonour, or bury her in earth? Look now! How evil is the judgment they make (concerning God, and how evil is the decision they debate)![659]

This verse points out a moral value prevalent during the Age of Ignorance, and strictly prohibits an unjust killing of women. The verse highlights woman's freedom and right to life, and safeguards her rights. The Prophet did not only draw attention to the unjustness of the pre-Islamic approach but also made himself pursuer of the Qur'anic injunction prohibiting killing. Then, he establishes an important social principle by this statement: 'He who is involved (in the responsibility) of (bringing up) daughters, and he is benevolent towards them, they would become protection for him against Hell-fire.'[660]

At this point, it is necessary to call to mind the thesis claiming that Islam enslaves women and usurps their rights.[661] According to this thesis, women are in a

[658] Gulen, *Beyan* (*Exposition)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p,73-74.
[659] Qur`an 16:58-59
[660] Bukhari, *Adab*,24
[661] n.a, "Kadin nasıl köleleştirildi? Nasıl özgürleşecek?," http://devrimkurtulus.forums3.com/devrimci-kadin-f70/kadin-nas-kolele-tirildi-nas-ozgurle-ecek-t281.html

status where they have no right to life, and considered as men's slaves. Therefore, the thesis argues that women were free before Islam, and lost their freedom with the advent of Islam. However, historical facts prove otherwise, and demonstrate that women gained their full freedom thanks to the value system Islam introduced.

This fact necessitates looking into moral foundations of the family structure before Islam. This period was marked by the fact that women and girl children had no value at all.[662]

Women in different civilisations and in the modern era

While this was the status of women in pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula, the situation was not much different in certain other civilisations. In ancient Chinese civilisation, women had no name and were called by numbers. And in certain areas women were considered pigs. During ancient Greek and Roman times, the prevalent view was that 'woman is the gateway to Hell.' This view has entered into historical records as the philosophy of Plato (427-347 BC). Also according to a thought attributed to Aristotle (384-322 BC), women viewed as 'unfinished men.' Cicero (106-43 BC) said: 'Women were created to hinder men achieving great things. If they were not created, men could be deified.'[663] Women are defined as obstacles by these approaches. Saint Augustine (354-430 AC) was quoted to have said: 'If women were resurrected with sexual desire in the Hereafter, I am afraid they would seduce men even there.' Similar thoughts and approaches concerning women have also been witnessed during later periods. John Milton (1608-1674), the author of *Paradise Lost*, view women as a creation error.[664]

[662] Salih Akdemir, "Tarih Boyunca ve Kur'an-ı Kerim'de Kadın," *İslâmî Araştırmalar* 4(Ankara, 1991). p, 263.
[663] Gülen, *Beyan*. *(Exposition*) p,73-74
[664] ibid. 74.

In contemporary time, certain thoughts about women are being observed relatively similar to earlier periods. For example, Nietzsche's (1844-1900) maxim, 'When you go to woman, take the whip along,' classifies women a gender to be tamed by beating. Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) who first said, 'happy to be married,' can be seen to have later deviated from his views as he labelled woman striving to lower and vulgarise her husband's soul because she is common and vulgar.[665] As these views belong to leading intellectuals of various societies, it will not be wrong to assume that they were welcomed by many of their followers.

Here, this reality should not be ignored: As every individual man has his own peculiar moral character, women-folk also have moral values and characteristics changing from one individual to another. Therefore, problems stemming from the character defects of certain women cannot be generalised to all women-folk. Some intellectuals mirroring the negative female image in their family or social environment into the wider community can be considered as projecting their subjective views on women generally. How can attributing one individual's peculiarities to a whole society be seen as an objective view? Yet, presenting such a peculiar case as a characteristic of a nation or civilisation may result in even more grave consequences. Again, it is not reasonable to blame all Arabs for the despicable custom of certain desert tribes burying new born baby girls alive in pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula or any other nation. Otherwise the Arab nation would be extinct in one generation. It is not the case, and moreover, there are many wealthy businesswomen and top female executives in Arab societies. With its principle of right to life, the Qur'an highlights the repugnance of such a custom, which was practised only among a few desert tribes.[666] Even today, it can be witnessed in some uneducated societies that the girl

[665] ibid.74
[666] Qur'an, 5:32 'It is because of this that We ordained for (all humankind, but particularly for) the Children of Israel: He who kills a soul unless it be (in legal punishment) for murder or for causing

children are viewed as detestable and shameful. This, at the same time, demonstrates the universality of the Qur'anic verses. What was occurring in the past—due to ignorance—is still occurring today, and will occur in the future so long as ignorance is prevalent in society.

Time of the Prophet and women in general Islamic concept

After this brief overview of the status of women in the course of history, Islam's approach to women in general—and particularly that of the *sunnah*—needs to be examined. Reading and analysing the *sunnah*'s value system regarding women essentially through Gülen's comments would be appropriate. Taking into consideration the value attributed to women in pre-Islamic Arab Peninsula and certain other civilisations, Gülen demonstrates important approaches. According to him, Islam reinstituted women's rights previously usurped by the society, and took them under protection by instituting firm rules in this regard.[667] The Qur'an's declaration, '...According to customary good and religiously approvable practice, women have rights similar to those against them (that men have), but men (in respect of their heavier duty and responsibility) have a degree above them (which they must not abuse). And God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise,'[668] clearly emphasises the rights of women, and elevates them to their ontological position consistent with the plan of creation.[669] According to Gülen, this verse gives women all their rights, including the right to divorce, and highlights that women have natural rights. This view of Gülen's is in perfect accordance with Sunni scholars' views. Gülen asserts that the Farewell Speech established an important principle, and argues

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disorder and corruption on the earth will be as if he had killed all humankind; and he who saves a life will be as if he had saved the lives of all humankind…'

[667] Gülen, *Beyan*. p, 75-76

[668] Qur`an 2:228

[669] Gülen, *Beyan*.(*Exposition*) p,75.

that this alone constitutes evidence regarding women's rights. Looking from this angle, his views appear to be somewhat an interpretation of the abovementioned Qur'anic verse. By this statement, 'Fear Allah about women; because you have taken them in Allah's trust,'[670] the Prophet, in fact, takes women under protection and security. The Prophet's elevation of women's status to a respectful position is a historical event for womenfolk. The responsibility of the protection of the womenfolk—relatively weaker gender in terms of physical strength—has been put on the shoulders of the menfolk as their custodians. The role of the custodian here is in the sense of holding womenfolk as a trust of God, and ensuring the safeguarding of all their rights. According to Gülen, women have been emancipated from all forms of oppressions by the rulings of the Qur'an and *sunnah*. A clear emphasis on women's rights and status in the Qur'an and *sunnah*, and to their name a Qur'anic chapter's title being dedicated are viewed as the emancipation of women by Islam.[671] It should be noted that Gülen approaches the issue of women and their rights in Islam from a different perspective. He considers the issue as a matter of oppression and victimisation. The 'human' factor, in his understanding, is the most honourable of the creation, whose rights cannot be violated. Looking from this perspective, Gülen takes the side of with wronged people, regardless of their gender. In the light of women's status in the Age of Ignorance, this approach of Gülen's may be considered reasonable. At the same time, he is reacting to prejudicial views labelling women as being oppressed in Islam. In this regard, Gülen refutes unjust criticisms directed to Islam and *sunnah*, and, at the same time, protects women who have been subjected to discredit, and elevate them to their rightful status. Gülen supports his approaches with L. E. Obbald's views which have been quoted as stating, 'Freeing women from slavery and reinstating their usurped rights have only been possible by the advent of

[670] Muslim, *Hajj* 147; Abu Da'wud, *Manasiq* 55.
[671] Gülen, *Beyan*.p,75.

Islam.'[672] This means that women found their identity, and took their place in the society as a name and a value thanks to the Qur'an and *sunnah*. And the rationale that Gülen highlights and defends must be nothing but this. This approach of a researcher with a different cultural and religious background, i.e. L. E. Obbald, draws attention to the inadequacy of comments and inferences presently made in that cultural environment.

Gülen strives to make his arguments more convincing by supporting them with some researchers' thesis from Europe such as G. Demombyne and Stanley Lane-Pole (1854-1931).[673] What is noteworthy in these statements—which should not be understood in the sense that the currently existing civil laws are not adequate—is the necessity of women's issues to be addressed by a more comprehensive and inclusive method. It is also important to note that Gülen is trying to respond implicitly to many criticisms raised by non-Muslim scholars by quoting positive remarks from Western scholars.

Particularly in response to the spreading misconception of women being imprisoned in her house in Islam, Gülen offers various comments from the time of al-'Asr al-Sa'adah (the Age of Happiness) and *sunnah*.[674] Gülen argues that, unless approached with prejudice, it is very clear to see in all major Islamic resources and exemplary practices of al-salaf al-salihin that the Muslim woman has never been a prisoner in her house. According to him, the ignorance of this fact and various misconceptions are possibly the results of the misunderstandings and wrong practices stemming from customs all along the history being attributed to Islam.[675]

[672] ibid.75.
[673] ibid.75.
[674] 'Paradise is under the feet of mothers.' (Nasa'i, *Jihad*, 6)
[675] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük İksiri(The Potion for Immortality) Kırık Testi-7* (Istanbul: Nil Publication, 2011).p,45.

In Islam, women hold a position where they can ask questions, make queries, and be conferred with. In this civilisation and the practical *sunnah* of the Prophet, womenfolk constitute a community who requests from the Prophet, and obtains, a specific time slot to be set aside for their education, and who forms knowledge platforms of their own. They also hold a position where they could go to war and fight against the enemy when needed. They were also in the commerce as businesswomen. Besides all these, women are also known as educationists-pedagogues who are in charge of rearing children.[676] Disregarding all these facts results in impeding the recognition of the true position of women in the *sunnah*, and in making way for the emergence of one-sided opinions. Or, failure of in depth understanding of matters explained in *hadith*s brings about only a superficial view of reality. After the Hudaybiyyah Treaty, due to the slow response by his companions to his order to slaughter their sacrificial animals and end the state of ihram, the Prophet went to his wife Umm Salamah, and consulted with her. She said to him: 'O Messenger of Allah, would you like them to obey your order? Go out and do not speak to anyone of them until you slaughter your camel and call out to your barber to cut your hair.'[677] The Prophet accepted her advice, did as she suggested and prevented an undesirable event from happening.[678]

Women in our days according to Gülen

While providing examples from the time of the companions and later periods, Gülen does not hesitate to question the status of women in modern societies, or to make various criticisms. He draws attention to the necessity of women being active in the society, and puts forth certain arguments. He takes a serious stand against the insistence on maintaining in practice, in our days, thoughts and views stemming from

[676] ibid.47-57
[677] Bukhari, *Shurut* 15; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad* 4/330
[678] Gülen, *Kalb İbresi Kırık Testi-9*.205.

customs and cultures. He stresses that women are being subjected to restrictions and limitations in both social and professional life all over the world, including countries that are supposed to be modern democracies. And he asks certain questions: How many modern countries have female presidents today? How many countries have high ranked female officers in their armies? In how many parliaments women are represented proportionally? How many female spiritual leaders and religious representatives do exist among the world religions?[679] Are the numbers of women employed in the Courts of Justice, government offices, police forces approaching anywhere near their male counterparts? He directs the same questions to Turkey and continues: How many female presidents exist in the history of the modern Turkish Republic (none)? Is this the view that is dominant that a female president would compromise the administration due to her mental weakness? Why is it that the numbers of female ministers are nowhere near their male counterparts? Why has no woman been appointed as the chief of joint forces or as a chief of any force?[680] With these queries, Gülen, in a way, turns to the feminist movements—which never stop talking about women's rights and which appear to be their advocates—and expects some satisfactory answers from them.[681] With these questions, in fact, he points out the need for those who claim that the *sunnah* restricts the rights of women to question their own social structures. At this point, when he evaluates the wide circle drawn by the *sunnah*, he does not insist on the absolute necessity of the questions he asked. But, looking from the point of *sunnah*, he opines that women taking their parts in these fields and occupying these positions would not pose any problem. He expresses his view that women have the ability to fill those positions mentioned.[682] The questions that Gülen raised are important in the name of finding answers to perplexing questions

[679] It is noteworthy to remember here female scholars and sufis such as 'A'ishah, the Prophet's wife.
[680] Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük İksiri Kırık Testi-7*. 47.
[681] ibid. 46.
[682] ibid.48.

about the relationship between *sunnah* and women in modern days. A thorough research of historical records will reveal answers to the abovementioned question in due course.

According to Gülen, a woman is a legally free and independent individual. The quality of being a woman does not, in any way, restrict or remove any of the competences she possesses. According to the *sunnah*, women, like anyone else, have the freedom of expression. Legally, there exists no difference between men and women in this respect. A case in point in this matter is the following example from the *sunnah*: A woman discussed with the Prophet the issue of *zihar*[683] between her husband and herself so persistently that a revelation came down, setting the Divine ruling. The Qur'anic chapter that contains these verses was named after this event, *al-Mujadilah* (She that Disputed or the Pleading Woman). This story of a woman's seeking justice is an important evidence and reliable reference to the freedom of expression for women and the rule of the Law in Islam. This and similar events helped the companions of the Prophet to develop the sense of seeking justice and questioning as a natural behaviour. The courage emanating from the Qur'an and *sunnah* acts as an important function in the representation of the Law. The Caliph 'Umar suggested to set up an upper limit to the amount of *mahr* (dowry) in order to ease the financial burden on people who want to get married. But an old woman objected to 'Umar's view and said: 'O Umar, is there a Qur'anic verse or *hadith* on this issue that you know and we do not? The Qur'an commands, "But if you still decide to dispense with a wife and marry another, and you have given the former (even so much as amounts to) a treasure, do not take back anything thereof," (4:20)

[683] A pre-Islamic custom practised during the Age of Ignorance. This was a form of divorce proffered by a husband upon his wife, which likens her to the back of his mother, which makes her prohibited for himself for ever. But he would not actually divorce his wife. This would violate wife's rights. Islam prohibited this unjust practice (58:2), and introduced some sanctions for those who continued to practise it (58:3).

thus not setting a limit to the amount of bridal dues.' And the Caliph 'Umar said aloud to himself, 'O 'Umar, you do not know your religion even as much as an old woman,'[684] and accepted the correctness of this ruling.[685] Women, whose name and existence were a subject of controversy, were elevated by the help of the teaching of the Qur'an and *sunnah* to a level where they could teach a law lesson to the head of the state. This, in fact, highlights the education of women regardless of their age. An elderly woman's knowledge of the Qur'an and *sunnah* and her ability to directly deduce rulings therefrom demonstrates the level of her education. Also, such an action by an elderly woman—considered to be beyond the age of marriage in her society—who reacts with such a sensitivity and passion carries important messages in the name of standing up to defend the rights of younger women. This and similar events constitute a good example to show the level of the sense of justice and sensitivity in the society.

Women's right to education and status as educationists

Starting from the abovementioned historical events, Gülen makes important inferences about the status and scientific competency of women in Islam. The wide range of rights and freedoms provided by the *sunnah* are among the most important factors that positively affects and encourages seeking of knowledge and education among womenfolk. Although the level of education was very poor and literacy among womenfolk was very low during the early years of the Meccan Period, this situation changed during the Medina Period, and literacy and education showed a dramatic upward improvement. The effect of the female companions' commitment to and involvement in knowledge and education become an exemplary model for the future generations. Also, the Prophet's wives—each one acting as a female mentor—guided

[684] al-Bayhaqi, *al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 7/233
[685] Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük İksiri(The Potion for Immortality) Kırık Testi-7*.p,55-56

the leading Islamic scholars. For example, scholars such as Masruq b. Ajda', Tawus b. Kaysan (d. 725 CE), Ata b. Abi Rabah (d. 115 AH), al-Aswad b. Yazid al-Nakha'i took lessons from the Prophet's wives; especially 'A'ishah is known to be a prodigy in the discipline of *fiqh* in Islam.[686]

As can be seen in the historical records, women in Islam, especially the Prophet's wives, are holding a position of teacher/trainer, and the menfolk also benefited from their lessons. Thus, the limits of the dialogue between men and women with regard to education are being drawn. Looking from this point of view, theses arguing that Muslim women's right to education have been violated in modern days are lacking a serious basis. These theses have been refuted by historical Muslim women's portraits from the early period. The reason for raising this issue in our days, as inferred by Gülen also, may be the association of some cultural residues falsely with Islam, and certainly not Islam itself. As can be observed in certain cultures, usurping women's right to education and keeping them in their houses cannot possibly be associated with the spirit of the *sunnah*. It is understood that mentalities of this kind prevail in cultures where the principles and sensitivities of the *sunnah* were failed to be understood properly. Starting from this point, it is rather impossible to talk about proper understanding of and adherence to the *sunnah* in communities where women's right to education have been usurped. And this illustrates a good example of the lack of education in a society. In fact, the application of the authentic *sunnah* proves to be the exact opposite of this practice. Gülen's starting from these points and beginning his movement of reconstructing individuals-communities and the Islamic world with education may be considered an appropriate and meaningful thesis.

[686] ibid.56.

Equality between genders and Gülen's view

Equality between genders is another impasse for women in this century. Gülen's comments on the issue of equality demonstrate a different approach than his contemporaries. He expresses his views based on the Qur'anic verse, 'And all things We have created in pairs, so that you may reflect and be mindful.'[687] According to him, the word 'pair' mentioned in the verse refers to gender difference (male-female) between all particles in the nature, plants, animals and human-beings, and these opposite genders are interdependent and complete each other. Perhaps there exist more 'pairs' in the nature not yet discovered and can only be known by advance of the science and technology. Electron with proton, the Earth with sky, night with day and man with woman form interdependently a unity. Therefore, man and woman cannot be equal as electron and proton or negative and positive are not equal. This is an unchangeable law of the creation. As nothing has been created as complete and 'perfect' (perfectness in its absolute sense can only be attributed to God alone), everything that exists is in need of its opposite in order to form a 'whole' and to subsist.[688] Gülen substantiates this view of his by the *hadith* saying, 'Women are the other halves of men,'[689] and makes reasonable comments on the *hadith*. He explains that the word *shaqiq* (half) mentioned in above *hadith* refers to one half of a whole divided into two through the middle. In other words, each one of the two equal halves of a whole is the *shaqiq* of the other half. In this sense, a man and a woman both represent two equal halves. But neither one is the same as the other. This means, their inherent dispositions and psycho-spiritual qualities are completely different, thus, in this sense, they are not equal. Gender difference is a fact of life and human-beings cannot interfere with the creation. This fact necessitates everyone, believers and non-

[687] Qur`an 51:49
[688] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Prizma (Prism) 1* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p,139-140
[689] Abu Da'wud, *Taharah*, 94; Ibn Hanbal, 6/377.

believers, to abandon this dream of equality between genders and consider both man and woman in their own status.[690] In fact, man and woman are like one soul in two bodies; in other words, they represent the two different aspects of one reality. Over time, deterioration of this integrity resulted in turning the balances upside down, and degeneration of family and social orders.[691] Drawing on an article dealing with the status of woman in Islam by an investigative writer, Hammudah 'Abd al-'Ati, Abdulkadir Suphandagi writes: 'Man and woman are not the exact same of each other. By their superior and lesser qualities they mutually complete each other in terms of rights and responsibilities in life.'[692]

In addition, Gülen elaborates on the Qur'anic verse[693] assigning men a higher status over women—a point, which appears to be in contradiction with what has been mentioned above. Gülen views the attribute of 'authority' mentioned in the verse beginning with '…inasmuch as [men having] greater capacity than [women]…' as the status of man in the capacity of head of the family and the responsibility that comes with it.[694] Inasmuch as the division of labour is necessary in all aspects of life, the same is the case also in the family. Here, the bigger part of the burden such as the responsibility for providing for the family has been bestowed upon men, and women have been exonerated from such high responsibility duties.[695] This, in fact, is the manifestation of respect and protection of women. As to the man's responsibilities towards his family, Gülen's views are in line with many Sunni Muslim scholars'

[690] Gülen, *Prizma 1*. P,140.
[691] *Beyan*.(*Exposition*) p,73-76.
[692] Abdülkadir Süphandağı, "Kadından ısrarla Esirgenen Bağımsız Şahsiyeti, İslam 14 Asır Önce Vermiş," *Zaman* 21 May 2005.
[693] "Men (those who are able to carry out their responsibilities) are the protectors and maintainers of women inasmuch as God has endowed some of people (in some respects) with greater capacity than others, and inasmuch as they (the men) spend of their wealth (for the family's maintenance). Good, righteous women are the devoted ones (to God) and observant (of their husbands' rights), who guard the secrets (family honour and property, their chastity, and their husband's rights, especially where there is none to see them, and in the absence of men,) as God guards and keeps undisclosed (what should be guarded and private)." (4:34)
[694] With this interpretation, Gülen shares the same view with *sunni* scholars.
[695] Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük İksiri Kırık Testi-7*. p, 51-52

approach to this issue. To put it more clearly, the division of labour mentioned here does not mean that women cannot take a role in the world of business. On the contrary, women can be as productive as they can in their fields of competence. The verse is emphasising the women's exemption from providing for the family rather than limiting their right to participate in the workforce. However, women would like to work, and therefore the jobs must be appropriate for their physical abilities and psychological disposition. Offering women inappropriate jobs cannot be reconciled with the principle of equality; on the contrary, this would mean usurping their rights. Similarly, forcing men to work in jobs against their nature would also constitute violation of their rights.

Gülen demonstrates a rather different approach based on the necessity of proper physical conditions that are suitable to the natural disposition. In nature, everything has been created in certain measure and balance, and placed and positioned appropriately. Therefore, maintaining this natural balance will remove injustice. For example, this *hadith* illustrates the wisdom of creation: 'A cow which was yoked turned to its master and said: "I was not created for this kind of works!"'[696] Gülen selects this kind of *hadith*s carefully in connection with the subject matter, and strives to explain his views to people all walks of life. By this approach, Gülen makes even farm field labourers fit into his target audience. He employs examples that they can easily understand. Inasmuch as saying 'every creature must be employed according to its ability and purpose of creation so that the true justice be established,'[697] Gülen interprets the *hadith* from a different perspective. Day and night or the sun and the moon cannot be considered equal in physical creation or have the same purpose. They complete each other although they are not equal.

[696] Bukhari, *hars* 4; Muslim, *Fadail al-Sahabah*, 13; Tirmidhi, *Manaqib* 16.
[697] Gülen, *Prizma 1*. p, 142.

It needs to be mentioned here that an absolute equality is non-existent not only between different species but also between the same species. Obvious contrasts can be seen between creatures of the same kind. However, women being different in their natural disposition do in no way make them less human. Conversely, women seeing men as less human can only help to generate a negative energy, which ultimately result in an unnecessary conflict. Therefore, instead of dissociating individuals and communities from each other, all differences should essentially be accepted in their own relative positions and treated as a common wealth. The Qur'anic statement, 'The believers, both men and women: they are guardians, confidants, and helpers of one another,'[698] encourages mutual support rather than conflict, and highlights the complementary factor.

Gülen's approach to *tasattur* (being covered/headscarf)

The most frequently asked question and a subject of debate in the modern era is the issue of *tasattur* (Islamic dress code), more specifically women's headscarf.[699] The issue of the headscarf[700] has been clearly enjoined by the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Covering the head is not only a Divine order in Islam but also in many other religious traditions:

> Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.[701]

[698] Qur`an 9:71
[699] *Tasattur* is an Islamic term, which means to cover the parts of the body that have to be covered as required by the Qur'an and *sunnah*. This Islamic dress code applies to both men and women. However, in the Muslim world, the term is generally used to indicate women's covering themselves in modest clothing, and more specifically the headscarf.
[700] Qur`an 24:31
[701] I Corinthians, 11:4-6

As can be seen in the above verses, the New Testament commands women to cover their head. It is also possible to see similar remarks in the Old Testament. [702]

What is understood from the above passages is that covering up for women was a norm in society. Also references to women's clothing such as muffler, bonnet, mantle, wimple, hood and veil can be seen in other parts of the Old Testament.[703] It can thus be said that all three major religions highlight the same fundamental issues.

Covering up for women is a legal obligation agreed by almost all exegetes, jurists and *hadith* scholars all along the history of Islam. However, this issue has been a subject of criticism like *sunnah*, and took its place among the popular topics of debate in our days. It is rather difficult to understand certain theologians' attitude against the headscarf despite all clear evidences in the Qur'an and *sunnah* and Muslim women's practices since the time of the Prophet.[704] Some religious researchers argue that the headscarf is not mentioned in the Qur'an, and the meanings of the verses related to the issue have been distorted. Zekeriya Beyaz, Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, Şahin Filiz, İhsan Eliaçık can be mentioned among the representatives of this view. However, there is no shred of evidence to support this view in the Islamic literature since the early days of Islam. The Divine command for the head cover is clear, and has never been understood otherwise. Feyza Bilgin asserts that the reference to the head cover in the Qur'an is in the context of moral code, therefore this phraseology is not consistent with 'command' form but is rather an advisory form.[705] Salih Akdemir shares the same view and affirms that the said verse should be understood in the sense of advice instead of order. Akdemir also

[702] Genesis, 24:64-65: 'And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, what man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.'
[703] SeeIsaiah, 3:16-23.
[704] Gülen, *Vuslat Muştusu (Glad Tidings of a Reunion) Kırık Testi-8*. p,193-196.
[705] Feyza Bilgin, "Başörtüsü bir tavsiyedir vazgeçilmez bir dini emir değil," *Sabah Newspaper* (02 October 2006).

emphasises that the verses in question are about the Prophet's wives, daughters and 'married women.'[706] However, statements in those verses such as 'they should restrain their gaze [from what is prohibited],', 'guard their private parts and chastity,'[707] 'they should not display their charms,' 'and let them draws their veils over their bosoms,'[708] are consistent with decisive command form rather than a simple advice. This clear Divine command comes in a relatively moderate style suitable for women's natural psychological disposition. Viewing this command of wearing headscarf in an advisory context would create obvious contradictions within the verse; statements such as 'they should restrain their gaze' and 'guard their private parts and chastity,' which clearly prohibit certain acts would become meaningless, and those illegal acts would be seen as legal. Applying the same rationale to the whole Qur'an would, in fact, render the Book into a bundle of contradictions. Therefore, the approach adopted by Bilgin and Akdemir is objectionable. Whether Bilgin and Akdemir accept or reject the *sunnah* as a source of reference is another matter. But, a *sahih hadith* clearly explains that the abovementioned verse orders women to cover their charms. Bukhari transmits 'A'isha's words in this respect: 'May Allah have mercy on the early immigrant women. When the verse "That they should draw their veils over their bosoms" was revealed, they tore their thick outer garments and made veils from them.'[709]

As it can be seen from above, the criticism of the *sunnah* goes along with questioning of the Islamic values without reliable evidence and/or sources. The verdict of the *sunnah*, which expounds Qur'anic verses regarding to the headscarf, is unequivocally clear. However, the *sunnah* itself being a subject of questioning, its verdicts are automatically disregarded. Inasmuch as the great majority of people are unable or, for some reason, unwilling to retrieve detailed information/instruction

[706] Gerçek Gündem, "İlahiyatçıdan Türban Çıkışı," *Newspaper Gerçek Gündem* 4 December 2007.
[707] Qur'an 24:30
[708] Qur'an 24:31
[709] *Tafsir al-Munir* (24:31)

directly from the Qur'an, the thoughts and views of the scholars and researchers play a major role in the religious education of the populace. Average individuals are generally satisfied with the piece of information they receive from 'knowledgeable' people whom they trust. This may result in very strong evidence being considered 'weak' in the hands of a weak researcher or vice versa.[710] Therefore it is the duty of jurists and theology experts to identify correctly the values and principles of the *sunnah*, and the *hadith* and *sunnah* literature. Failure to do so may affect the lives of many average individuals.

Looking from this perspective into Gülen's views on the issue of headscarf, it is clearly visible that he shares the same views with the scholars of the past as mentioned in the traditional *sunni* literature. That is, he strongly defends the headscarf and by virtue of its importance he insistently dwells upon the issue. However he takes a different approach than his contemporaries. Gülen explains that the command of wearing headscarf is among the 'furu'at'[711] (*furu' al-fiqh*: lit. branches of jurisprudence) of Islam, and draws attention to the need that it should not be made a subject of debate in this day and age. Here he points to an important detail, and emphasises that *tasattur* is not a matter of faith, which constitutes the essential of Islam. That is, *tasattur (headscarf)* is included among neither the pillars of Islam nor the fundamentals of faith. Therefore, a practice, which is among the transactions, cannot be elevated to the same level with the declaration of faith (*kalimah al-shahadah*). *Kalimah al-shahadah* is the first pillar of the faith—an essential part of the faith. Inasmuch as the headscarf is not an essential part of the faith but is among the compulsory (*fardh*) acts that come under transactions (*mu'amalat*), failing to cover the head is a sin, however, women who commit this

[710] Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Mektubat* (Istanbul: Envar Publishing, 1995). p, 370
[711] One of the major genres of juristic literature, which deals with issues open to *ijtihad*.

sin are still within the fold of Islam.[712] It is possible to say that with this approach, Gülen showed a way out of the dilemma that female university students were facing in Turkey and some other countries. In this modern age, he offered a solution to a serious problem that was forcing young believing girls to choose between two difficult options: abandoning their dream of university education or rejecting a command of God.

Polygamy in Islam and Gülen's perspective

Gülen elaborates on the polygamy in Islam, which is an issue that has been much criticised and exploited. The criticisms are concentrated especially on two issues. Firstly, there are attempts to condemn Islam for the number of wives the Prophet had. Secondly, focus is drawn on the permission for a Muslim man to marry up to four wives. To begin with, Gülen offers reasonable comments on the issue of the Prophet's polygamy. These comments are mainly based on the *sunnah* and *sirah*. The arguments he put forth on this issue are very convincing and no refutation has been published to this date. In fact, his arguments are not new; they can be easily analysed, and a close study would disclose its consistency with rationale. For this reason, Gülen opines that there is an ulterior motive behind making this issue—which is very clear—a subject of debate, and concludes that it is the result of the serious lack of knowledge in the field of *sirah*. Gülen draws attention to the fact that, looking from an analytical research perspective, answers to this issue can easily be found in the *maghazi* and *sirah* literatures.[713] Gülen attributes a special care and importance to the Prophet's chastity and modesty. At this point, he prefers to meet his interlocutor on a reasonable ground. In a hot climate area where the age of marriage, which at the time was as low as 12 or 13, the Prophet's remaining bachelor up to the age of 25 years and

[712] Gülen, *Vuslat Muştusu Kırık Testi-8*. p, 198-199.
[713] *İnancın Gölgesinde -2(Essentials of the Islamic Faith)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2009). p, 103.

being known and respected for his modesty is strikingly noteworthy. Thus, even his harshest critics could not find a shred of evidence to support their claims. Should they had been able find any evidence, they would have used them most effectively to discredit the Prophet's reputation. Even the Meccan people, who were staunchly opposed to his Prophetic mission, maintained their respect for his honour and modesty. The Prophet's first marriage was to Khadijah, at that time a 40 years old widow, when he was only 25. And this happy marriage lasted 23 years monogamously.[714] At this point, the critics need to be called to reason. Living a chaste bachelor life until he was 25, than marrying a widow who was 15 years older than him, instead of a young maiden, poses a serious question to be answered by the critics who claim that sexual lust was the main motive behind the Prophet's marriages. Another point to be noted is that there was again a bachelor period of 5 years after the death of Khadijah. After this second bachelor period the Prophet reached the age of 53, which is an age when a man's sexual desire begins to decline. Gülen draws attention specifically to the fact that the Prophet's other marriages took place in this age period when the need for marriage diminishes. He made his second marriage at the age of 53 to Sawdah bint Zam'ah who was than 55.[715] Most of his marriages after this age are directly related to his Prophetic mission. Keeping in mind that he died at the age of 63, the last ten years of his mission coincides with his old-age. Marriages that take place during this age period are less likely to be motivated by sexual desire. It is also noteworthy to mention here that critics highlighting especially the Prophet's polygamous family life, and persistently disregarding the culture of polygamy that was prevalent in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula, and the fact that women were being bought and sold like a commodity is a striking deficiency of objectivity.

[714] ibid. 104-115.
[715] Akgül, *Ezvac-ı Tahirat*. 44.

Gülen asserts that polygamy is not contrary to the spirit of the prophethood, and argues that polygamy did not begin with the Prophet; the prophets before him also used this practice as part of their mission. The following can be listed among the reasons behind the Prophet's polygamous practice: Educating and training female teachers and role models for Muslim women; need to address and record specific issues for women of all ages; representation of the Prophetic mission by establishing kinship between various nations and tribes; and the individual cases of some of the Prophet's wives.[716] Also the Prophet's private family life needed to be clearly explained to the public so that they could find answers to their questions regarding their own private and family lives. Otherwise many aspects of Islam would be obscured—in this case Islam could not be seen as a universal religion. Therefore, the message delivered by a prophet and his private life must be known in minute detail, including women-specific issues pertaining to all age groups. A successful accomplishment of all these tasks unavoidably necessitates a multiplicity of wives from various ethnic, cultural and age backgrounds.[717] And these wives from different age groups and tribes continuously transmitted the details of the Prophet's private and family life to their people from their own perspectives and answered their questions.

Some of the Prophet's marriages are politically motivated. The Prophet's marriages established kinships and ended enmities between certain tribes. His marriages to Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith, Safiyyah bint Huyayy and Ramlah bint Abi Sufyan are of this kind. The fathers of Juwayriyyah and Safiyyah were leaders of the Jewish community. The Prophet's marriages to these two ladies established kinship and close relationship with the Jews of Medina. Similarly, his marriage to Abi Sufyan's daughter Ramlah ended Abi Sufyan's enmity against Islam. This marriage

[716] Gülen, *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler -1.*(*Questions and Answers)* p,92-104.
[717] Muhittin Akgül, "Peygamberimizin Hanımları Ve Evliliklerindeki Hikmetler-2 " *Yeni Ümit* 47(January-February-March 2000).

also resulted in establishing affinity with the Umayyads.[718] This practice of the Prophet's establishing relationship with various communities through marriage become a model for state-to-state relationships during later periods.

As can be seen from above, the Prophet's polygamous family life was reflecting some other aspects of his prophethood rather than his carnal desires. Also, polygamy being practised by the Prophet himself was in fact the application of the Islamic Law into practice. For example, Zayd b. Harithah is known to be the Prophet's adopted son. According to Arab customs at that time, an adopted son was regarded as a son and his wife treated as daughter-in-law. The Qur'an abolished this practice through the intermediary of the Prophet, and established that Zayd b. Harithah was not his legal son thus Zayd's wife not his daughter-in-law. After being divorced by Zayd b. Harithah, Zaynab bint Jahsh married the Prophet by Divine command. With the wording of the Prophet's wife, 'A'ishah, 'If Allah's Apostle were to conceal anything (of the Qur'an) he would have concealed this verse [regarding the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab bint Harithah].'[719] Because this was a very heavy burden on the Prophet.[720] This demonstrates that Divine commands take effect regardless of the Prophet's social status or psychological conditions. The true status of an adopted child established by an exemplary case involving the Prophet himself, and an old irrational custom thus abolished. Also, this historical event throws light on the wisdom behind the Prophet's marriages.

But besides this, the abovementioned verse clearly lays down provisions for polygamy, which is another important issue. In case of necessity, God leaves the

[718] ibid.
[719] Bukhari, *Tawhid* 22; Muslim, *Iman* 288: Ahmed b. Hanbal, 2/5.
[720] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-1*.p, 198

doors open for a man to marry up to four wives;[721] however, in case of failing to maintain justice between wives, advises to be content with monogamous family life.[722] Examining polygamy from modern civil laws perspective, Beşer concludes that monogamy is more reasonable.[723]

If it needs to be mentioned here, polygamy was not introduced or enjoined or advised by Islam. God gradually reduced this pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance practice of polygamy (sometimes powerful men could marry dozens of women) down to limiting it to four wives, and highlighted the superiority of the monogamous family life. Another one of these pre-Islamic customs is *nikah al-mut'ah* (temporary marriage) has been prohibited by the Prophet during the Medina period. It is unlawful according to *Sunni* Islam, however still practiced in the Shiite world.

Historical records show that the practice of polygamy was not limited to Muslim lands only; it was also customary in other cultures and parts of the world. Also, extramarital relationships—which are basically another form of polygamy—taking place in modern days all over the world necessitate an examination of this social phenomenon more closely. Nevertheless, the *sunnah* allows polygamy under certain conditions, e.g. a high number of women becoming widows without any support due to wars, etc., and in such cases, maintaining justice between wives is paramount. The Qur'an strongly warns those who fail to do so.[724] At this point, the

[721] 'If you fear that you will not be able to observe their rights with exact fairness when you marry the orphan girls (in your custody), you can marry, from among other women (who are permitted to you in marriage and) who seem good to you, two, or three, or four. However, if you fear that (in your marital obligations) you will not be able to observe justice among them, then content yourselves with only one, or the captives that your right hands possess. Doing so, it is more likely that you will not act rebelliously.' (4:3)

[722] 'You will never be able to deal between your wives with absolute equality (in respect of love and emotional attachment), however much you may desire to do so. But do not turn away altogether (from any one of them), so as to leave her in a dangling state (uncertain if she has or does not have a husband). If you act righteously (between them) and act in piety (fearful of doing any deliberate wrong to any of them), then surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.' (4.129)

[723] Faruk Beşer, *Hanımlara Özel İlmihal* (Istanbul: Nun Publishing, 2010).p,36-41.

[724] Halime Demireşik, "İslâm'da çok evlilik," *Şebnem Kadın ve Aile Dergisi* 6(2003).

Qur'an insistently emphasises the impossibility of maintaining justice between wives. Yet, considering the economic reasons also makes the impossibility of the justice more clear. The Prophet comments on the Qur'anic principles regarding this issue as he says: 'A man who has *two wives* and who is completely inclined to one and who ignores the other emerges with one side of his body paralysed in the Day of Judgment.'[725] Although this *hadith* justifies the practice of *rukhsah* (an exception to a general rule in *shari'ah*, or permission for opting for the easier way in contrast to *azimah* or determination), it draws attention to difficulties and serious obligations associated with polygamy. Also, the *hadith* charges men with the responsibility of protecting the rights of women and maintaining justice between them. The caution expressed in the Qur'an with regard to being content with one wife (monogamy) and the issue of upholding justice highlighted by this *hadith* are in perfect conformity with each other. In a sense, attentions are drawn to the rigors of the matter and the impossibility of justice. According to the verse and *hadith*, Gülen stresses that justice is the main significant point for second marriage. This justice point is difficult for the man to follow. That`s why Gülen emphasizes that marriage with only one wife is the *wajib* (necessary) in Islam.[726] He insistently does not advice second marriage and bans it implicitly. While pointing out the fact that the practice of polygamy is considered *mubah*[727] in Islam, Ahmet Kurucan[728] stresses that this is so under certain conditions and the government holds the power to ban polygamy whenever it deems necessary. For example, the codification of *Hukuk-u Aile Kararnamesi* (*Decree on Family Law*) 1917 prohibited polygamy in the Ottoman Empire (modern civil laws do not permit polygamy). Unfortunately, many people are unaware of the fact that such social issues are matters of *ijtihad*, and this *rukhsah* is being wantonly used by a few. Evidences

[725] Ibn Majah, *Nikah*, 47
[726] Zehv, *Hadis ve Hadisçiler*.
[727] *Mubah* is an Islamic term denoting an action as religiously neutral, i.e. neither forbidden nor recommended.
[728] Pupil of Fethullah Gülen

are clearly visible in the Islamic Law for judgements with regards to the state's power to outlaw polygamy.[729] Therefore, when this *rukhsah* is being abused it can easily be revoked by the state.

An important point here is that a wife has the right to enforce monogamy upon her husband simply by stipulating a clause in their marriage contact. This is because the consent of both parties is essential for the validity of a marriage act in Islam. The wife automatically gains the right to divorce her husband if he fails to honour the marriage contract, i.e. he attempts to marry another woman.[730] Hence, there is no way for a man to marry another woman without first obtaining the permission of his lawfully married wife. Any shrewd way of bypassing the civil law would result in the second 'wife' being deprived of all her legal rights and a great injustice against both women. Keeping all this in mind, it is clear that polygamy brings in a lot of drawbacks and is widely open to abuse especially in this day and age when the norms are set by modern civil laws.

A study of Gülen's written works fails to show any remarks on this issue. However, in view of his high esteem for individual and social justice, and especially for women's rights, it is possible to conclude that he would not approve of this kind of injustice against women. Because Kurucan's explanations—possibly as he learned from Gülen, his mentor—shows that the issue is open to abuse. Therefore, presenting a practice—which is *mubah*—at the same degree of obligation evokes different thoughts. According to Gülen, if it needs to be stated here, the Prophet advised marriage to a single woman (neither did he close the path to marriage nor did he order his followers to curtail their carnal feelings). Carnal feelings that are an ontological part of human nature have been directed to a lawful path, i.e. marriage. The Prophet's

[729] Ahmet Kurucan, "İlan Edilmemiş Nikah Olur Mu?," *Zaman Newspaper* 15 September 2011.
[730] Demireşik, "İslâm'da cok Evlilik."

art of nurturing had been in the framework of directing the natural human disposition to the positive direction and in line with the teleological purpose.[731] Consequently, keeping in mind the Prophet's sensitivities for the welfare and goodness of his community, it is possible to conclude that the practice of polygamy is not judicious—although *mubah*—as it causes injustice to both sexes.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that women, as human beings, are created equal to men and have the same normative legal values. Their rights, which had been usurped in the course of history of civilisations have been reinstated by the Creator and safeguarded by the Divine Law. Thus Islam reformed false customs and practices, which were prevalent before its advent, and introduced new social and moral norms for the benefit of humanity. The Prophet moved his companions from the Age of Ignorance to an exemplary position for the future generations. Both men and women find their respective position and status in this picture with perfect demarcation between sexes. All necessary laws and principles for individual and social requirements have been implemented by the Prophet himself during a short period of time such as 23 years, and no point was omitted. While being deprived of a name during the Age of Ignorance, women become a value as a result of the laws and lifestyle imposed by the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Today the dialectic, which argues that Islam turned women into slaves and rendered them as commodities vulnerable to abuse, either blatantly disregards the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance and the injustices that women were subjected to in other cultures, or suffers from lack of knowledge about Islam and its sources (Qur'an and *sunnah*). Because for Gülen, there exists no loopholes in the Qur'an, *sunnah* or the body of Islamic literature based on them that can be used to abuse women; both sexes have been appropriately positioned and evaluated. The following Qur'anic verses lays down the foundation stones of the

[731] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*. p, 72.73.

family and community structures: 'The believers, both men and women: they are guardians, confidants, and helpers of one another...'[732] The verse makes both man and woman responsible for promoting the good and preventing the evil, and considers them helpers of each other in this field. Again, all other rights of women, e.g. *tasattur*, marriage, freedom of speech, etc. have been firmly established and guaranteed by the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Nevertheless, Gülen does not completely disregard the misdeeds of many Muslim today who act in the name of God. So his main criticism should be read not only in the light of non-Muslims' attack against Islam but also in the light of mistakes made by Muslims. Thus one cannot see Gülen's approach as an attempt to reconcile Islam with liberal values of contemporary time. Clearly, his analysis of women issues is from time to time legally conservative and apologetic. Nevertheless, in certain issues he does not hesitate to go beyond classical framework. Finally, it is also important to note that the number of young women in Gülen (hizmet) movement is increasing and actively participating in many social and cultural project. Comparing with status of many women in various religious communities, because of Gülen's powerful appeal to their active participation in the society, women in Gülen movement are doing far more better than others.

The notion of tolerance and dialogue and Gülen's thoughts

Tolerance is a doctrine of the Divine religions and a starting point for people and civilisations to meet and be acquainted with each other. In the *sunnah* literature, the basis for tolerance is outlined in terms of forgiveness, compassion, understanding and respect. The positive impact of tolerance in inter-cultural/religious relations and world peace has been widely accepted, and its examination from the *hadith* point of view in Gülen's thoughts represents an important point. In this section, an answer will be sought to the question of the extent to which tolerance has been handled in the

[732] Qur'an 9:71

hadith literature. Also tolerance and dialogue are the most popular issues in the society and people needs in this contemporary time. Therefore it will be focused in this chapter.

There are many examples of intercultural and interfaith dialogues in Islamic literature. For instance, Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (d. 1273) evaluates the human-being from both material and spiritual aspects, and puts forth a portrait of love and tolerance for humanity. In this *sunnah* based teaching, Muslims view mankind as the most honourable creature of God, and consider tolerance as a moral due. During the 13th Century CE, like Mawlana Rumi, Yunus Emre with his maxim 'Love the created for the sake of the Creator,' also highlights the theme of tolerance in Islam and thus relates it to the gist of the value system of the *sunnah*. For the foundations of these two Muslim sages' teachings, which transcend centuries, are based on the *sunnah*.[733] The Prophet's mission during both the Meccan and Medina periods focused on tolerance—the Prophet's telling his companions not to interfere with a desert Bedouin urinating in the *masjid*[734] and similar examples—may be viewed as the main factor shaping many great Muslim scholars' understanding of tolerance.

Tolerance and dialogue according to Gülen means turning a blind eye to mistakes as in the case of the above *hadith*; showing respect and understanding to divergent views; being forgiving, not seeking justice for oneself even when fully justifiable; displaying a soft approach in the face of roughest thoughts and views by adopting the formula of '*kalb-i layyin, hal-i layyin, tavr-ı layyin*' (soft-hearted, mild-mannered, soft attitude), and having an immense heart that can view the most

[733] Mehmet Aydın, "Mevlana Hümanizminin Boyutları," *Türk-İslam Medeniyeti Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi, Mevlana Özel Sayısı* (2007). p, 53

[734] Narrated by Bukhari: 'A Bedouin stood up and started making water in the mosque. The people caught him but the Prophet ordered them to leave him and to pour a bucket or a tumbler of water over the place where he had passed the urine. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) then said, "You have been sent to make things easy and not to make them difficult.' (Bukhari, *wudu'* 57; Muslim, *taharah* 98-100.)

dissident thoughts as useful.[735] Gülen views tolerance as a prerequisite for one to be a Muslim. Also in his view, the *sunnah*—which is the source of the religion—necessitates tolerance and dialogue.[736] A quick comparison shows an interesting similarity between Gülen's thought and that of many philosophers.. The rationale of respect for thoughts and status along with them delivers important messages with regard to seeking solutions to human problems. In the final analysis, it is possible to say that different groups come close when it comes to understanding—and listening to—mankind, although they have differing views on the definition of tolerance. In fact, thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, John Locke, Spinoza, Gandhi, Mawlana Rumi, Yunus Emre and Gülen give priority to the human factor and weave values like tolerance around it.

It is well known that Islam enjoins tolerance through principle such as affections, respect, mercy, acquaintance and security. But nowadays a wrong perception is being created about the *sunnah*, which is the main source of these values. Tolerance and interfaith dialogue hold a position that can be an important cornerstone to overcome this wrong perception. Doubts in thoughts can thus be eliminated; affections and principles of peace will prevail. The Qur'an presents these tolerance principles as the Prophet's personal behaviour and way of life: 'It was by a mercy from God that (at the time of the setback), you (O Messenger) were lenient with them (your Companions). Had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would surely have scattered away from about you…'[737] This Divine commandment has been interpreted by the Prophet as follows: 'A Muslim is the one who avoids harming

[735] Gülen, *Yeşeren Düşünceler, (Blossoming Reflections) Çağ Ve Nesil* -6.p, 29
[736] Ali Ünal, *Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gülen* (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000).p,193-194
[737] Qur`an 3.159

Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a *muhajir* (emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all what Allah has forbidden.'[738]

As can be seen, tolerance is considered one of the basic principles of divine religions. Therefore, it is the source of nutrition for problem solving. Also it is necessary to mention here that believing in the previous Divine messages is among the principles of the Islamic creed. Hence Gülen approaches all Divine religions and other world religions with tolerance as dictated by his own faith.[739] And through this way he presents a peaceful world proposal where it would be possible to live in harmony under the teachings of Divine and non-Divine religions.

According to Gülen, it is not possible to talk about collective thoughts and consciousness in nations and communities where there exists no tolerance between individuals. In such an environment, thoughts go after each other and fall one after the other in a web of bickering and quarrelling, thus intellectuals' thoughts become worthless. And the administrative structures based on solid power move away from the populace. It is not possible to think that genuine freedom of speech and religion can be established in such a situation. Again, a government system bereft of tolerance cannot be considered a 'state of law.'[740] Looking into historical events would reveal that intolerant organisations had driven themselves and their communities into insoluble dilemmas. The administration of the pharaoh with its prohibition of the freedom of religion, belief and speech, had been noted down into history. As for today, it is not possible to talk about the freedom of press, independent academic thought or cultural activities in communities deprived of the principle of tolerance.

[738] Bukhari, *Iman*, 4
[739] Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance* (New Jersey: The Light Publishing, 2004).p, 75-76
[740] Gülen, *Yeşeren Düşünceler, Çağ ve Nesil* -6.p, 32

Such a social structure would hinder the survival of non-governmental organisations, and prevent the state from reaching the capillaries of the society.

It is also impossible to talk about compassion, which establishes peace, in an intolerant society. Gülen asserts that a *hadith*[741] heralds that on the Day of Judgment, Allah will order his angels to show tolerance to those who showed mercy and tolerance to others in this world. While highlighting the importance of this point, Gülen points out the metaphysical repercussions of this Divine message and *sunnah*, and establishes correlations between the physical world and the spiritual realm. Due to manners he received through the *sunnah,* he emphasises the importance of kindness towards animals alongside human beings. He illustrates as an example the case of a sinful woman receiving salvation for her kind act of giving water to a thirsty dog,[742] and, as mentioned in another *hadith*,[743] the exit from atrocity psychosis of a murderer who killed 99 people.[744] With the help of these kinds of illustrations, Gülen prepares the groundwork for compassion and tolerance to become a moral norm in individual and social lives, and the fact that he introduces training methods.

Gülen's academic level of interfaith dialogue and proposed solutions

Gülen's tolerance of and dialogue with different faiths had been outlined previously. In this section, Gülen's proposed solutions to problems will be analysed on an academic level in terms of dialogue.

Gülen, proposes some solutions during the meeting with Pope John Paul II on behalf of dialogue between religions. Gülen's first proposal regarding the field of academia is remarkable. He proposes a series of conferences in collaboration with the leaders of three divine religions for the identification of determined and deliberated

[741] Ahmad b. Hanbal, I, 5
[742] Muslim, *Tawbah* 155; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad* 2/507.
[743] al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir* 2/222.
[744] Gülen, *Yeşeren Düşünceler, Çağ Ve Nesil -6*. p, 30

commonalities and differences between the religions; the first was in Washington, DC, which included the participation of scholars in various world capitals.[745] This opportunity has provided new resolutions for issues and problems through analysis, which had not been discussed and had accumulated until today. The second proposal included students of different levels of social science and science discussing their knowledge with students of religious sciences. Through this, differences would enrich the knowledge shared and make it easier to comprehend.[746] Hence, academicians of various religions studying together would also establish close relationships between community members sharing the same beliefs. Gülen's third proposal was the constructing of a school of theology in Urfa, Harran, where Prophet Abraham- who is accepted as the father of the three divine religions- was born.[747] A similar offer had been made by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, who had recommended for a university called "Medresetü'z-Zehra" to be established in Van, aiming to have profound impact on solving the Kurdish problem in Turkey.[748] Education at the university would be offered in Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish, and labelled "the must, the licit and the requisite" respectively.[749] It is remarkable for all three proposals of Gülen to be education-driven. Hence, it can be seen that he considers education as a vital part of solving issues of the current day.

Hadi Uluengin accepts Gülen's recommendations as projects that will be able to sooth stereotypes, solve problems and establish healthy dialogue between countries.[750] Similarly, Ahmet Tezcan draws attention to the fact that the dialogue between religions will smooth the harsh edges of patriotism and fanaticism and

[745] *İnsanın Özündeki Sevgi*, (*Love and Mercy*) p. 16.186-188.
[746] ibid.
[747] ibid.
[748] Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Şualar* (Istanbul: Sözler Neşriyat, 2009).p, 482.
[749] Tuğba Kaplan, "Kürt Sorununu çözecek 105 Yıllık Proje: Medresetü'z-Zehra," *Zaman Neswpaper* (25-08-2013).
[750] Gülen, *Hoşgörü Ve Diyalog*.

minimise their harmful consequences. According to him, making Harran the base of science for all three divine religions will not only significantly contribute to global peace, but will also be of great assistance in ending terrorism in Turkey's Southeast.[751] The results of both Nursi's proposed university and Gülen's aspirations about Harran are capable of presenting profound solutions to current affairs.

Along with these proposals, upon his request for the reopening of the 'Heybeli Christian Seminary/Ruhban School' during their meetings, Gülen asked the Patriarch Bartholomew of Phanar (Istanbul) to use his identity to ask the government of Greece for the permission of a Turkish school in Selanik.[752] This suggestion is a project that holds important outcomes for both sides; the reestablishment of the 'Heybeli Ruhban' school would be of ecumenical profit for the Phanar Patriarchate, whilst helping the school's former graduates gain a global reputation. It will also contribute to international education and cultures.

In addition to these, interfaith dialogue and suggestions similar to those discussed have the power to enlighten the path of current global problems. Different nations, cultures, races and religions sharing the same atmosphere whilst holding true to their own beliefs will naturally diminish many problems. Steps to be taken in achieving such peace will further transform the world shrunken by technology into a global village and further yet, a neighbourhood. Furthermore, Gülen's suggestion of a school of theology in Urfa- Harran can ultimately be carried out in a way that will render it a project capable of tending to the needs of three religions, and an independent university with a far-reaching curriculum. Although these may seem like impassable tasks, they are definitely not unattainable.

[751] ibid.
[752] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* p, 389.

Works of tolerance based on *sunnah*

While discussing the constructive effect of the moral values such as tolerance, affection, compassion and forgiveness in the society, Thomas Michel gives examples from the schools that are projects as part of the Gülen's mission based on *sunnah*. He illustrates the friendly relations between Christian and Muslim children and their parents and a peaceful environment in a school in the middle of a region in Philippines where heavy armed conflicts are taking place between Christians and Muslims. Besides providing high-standard education, the school is conducive to solidarity among students/parents from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.[753] In case of offering good educational and toleration values together, it becomes possible to minimise the problems, and establish small inter-national/inter-religious peace islands.

The *sunnah*-based toleration practices demonstrated by Gülen are an important key to peace and security in society.[754] Acceptance of diverse colour,[755] religion, culture and ideology of individuals, communities and nations, and putting humanity at the forefront is an important achievement in terms of solving problems.

Here, it is important to mention this: in our days, the *sunnah*-based toleration and dialogue activities are not read and understood properly by certain researchers. Tolerance and dialogue meetings and fast-breaking dinners (*iftar*) organised by Gülen and his followers are being questioned and criticised. For example, Deniz Arman does not view *iftar* programs organised by Muslims being shared with various religious

[753] Thomas Michel, "Gülen as Educator and Religious Teacher," (05 February 2002), http://fgulen.com/en/press/review/24902-gulen-as-educator-and-religious-teacher?highlight=WyJ0aG9tYXMiLCJtaWNoZWwiLCJ0aG9tYXMgbWljaGVsIl0=&hitcount=0.
[754] Heydar Shadi, "Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Tolerance in Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Comparative Study of Fethullah Gülen and Abdul Karim Soroush," (22 November 2007), http://fgulen.com/en/gulen-movement/conference-papers/peaceful-coexistence/25870-interfaith-dialogue-and-religious-tolerance-in-contemporary-islamic-thought-a-comparative-study-of-fethullah-gulen-and-abdul-karim-soroush?highlight=WyJ0b2xlcmFuY2UiLCJkaWFsb2d1ZSJd.
[755] Taking into account the fact that the first *mu'adhdhin* (caller of *adhan*) in Islam Bilal al-Habashi was a black slave would help to understand better the all-embracing character of the *sunnah*.

communities such as Armenian, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish as rational-ethical. In a way, he considers this as a shame for the Muslim.[756] It is obvious that Arman has no idea about the *sunnah* and *sirah* literatures. His statements like 'I do not know,' 'I do not understand' in his article do, in fact, support this conclusion. As some examples from the Prophet's tradition, considering his innumerable contacts with people from all religious background since the beginning of his prophetic mission, and his repeated conversations with 'Amr b. Hisham (Abu Jahl) and 'Abd al-'Uzza b. 'Abd al-Muttalib (Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle) and his kind treatment of them despite the fact that they were strongly against him and Islam? His affinity with his uncle Abu Talib, his contact with the King of Abyssinia, his negotiations with the Jews of Medina and agreement on a common ground, etc. should all these and similar events be considered shameful according to Arman's approach? If all these acts constitute a shame on the part of the Prophet and his *sunnah*, what is the right way of dealing with people? When the Qur'an says, 'You have your religion (with whatever it will bring you), and I have my religion (with whatever it will bring me)'[757] it does not prohibit people from coming together with people, on the contrary, it advises them to come together on a common ground and share core human values. In this connection, Armenian Patrick Mesrob Mutafyan demonstrated his appreciation by his statement on the occasion of an *iftar* invitation, 'Up until a short while ago, even people from the same religion could not come together in this country, now people from different religions sat at the same dinner table.' Patrick Mutafyan highlighted the plausibility of the interfaith dialogue and tolerance in the Prophet's *sunnah* by saying, 'What brings different religions together at the same dinner table is Fethullah Gülen and the

[756] Deniz Arman, "Benim dinim bana, senin dinin sana," *Vatan Newspaper* 14. November. 2003.
[757] Qur`an 109:6

foundation of which he is the honorary president. Now we follow his path.'[758] In the meantime, Gülen emphasises that interfaith dialogue and tolerance has been misunderstood by certain sections of the community, and feels the need to make some explanation in order to point out the principles of the dialogue: 'This is a dialogue between followers of religions. You cannot mix religions together and obtain something syncretic.'[759] So, according to the *sunnah*, values, principles and understandings of each religion belong to itself. All in all, the Prophet did not only deliver his message during the Meccan and Medina periods, he by no means ridiculed the religious values of his opponents. The meaning of dialogue and tolerance is accepting everyone in their own status and to create a peaceful environment.

One could say that the Prophet took as a basis for his *sunnah* tolerance and dialogue. The first Christian-Muslim contact took place, as mentioned earlier, during the fifth year of the prophetic mission, in 615 CE, by the migration of a group of 15 Muslims to Abyssinia. A similar situation can be observed during the Medina period where the Prophet established a brotherhood tie between *ansar* (helpers; residents of Medina) and *muhajir* (immigrants from Mecca). The long lasting fight between the two Meccan tribes Aws and Khazraj had been settled by peace and brotherhood. Also, a treaty was signed by the Prophet with the Jewish tribes of Medina. Containing 47 clauses, this treaty agreement, which is also known as the 'Medina Document', was based on peace, security, mutual trust and respect.[760] With these steps taken, the Prophet first ensures the peace and security in the land, and accepts everyone in their own position. Historical documents show no record of any problems caused by the Muslim delegation sent to Abyssinia although they spent many years in this land of

[758] Mesrob Mutafyan, "Hocaefendi'nin Açtığı Yoldan Yürüyoruz," *Zaman Newspaper* 28. October. 2003.
[759] Gülen, *Hoşgörü ve Diyalog. (Tolerance and Dialogue)*
[760] Yusuf Çelik, "Peygamber'imizin Ehl-i Kitapla Münasebetleri " *Yeni ümit* 78(January, February, March 2007).

different religion and culture. Historical records witness the establishment of a peaceful environment rather than problems in Medina. Starting from this point, it is possible to comfortably say that Gülen's mission—in its opening to the world through its education and dialogue services—follows the same path. Members of the *Hizmet* movement are seen representing peace, tolerance and mutual understanding in every country they go to. No official report has been made regarding the 'volunteers' who represent the mission causing any clashes with the people or the state, or any complaints reported, where they operate since their opening outside their country, Turkey, in 1991. On the contrary, expressions of gratitude and welcome are offered by the locals, and as a result, the *Hizmet* movement is now active in 160 countries.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the world is becoming a global community composed of people adhering to diverse religions, beliefs and cultures . In this global village, relations between people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds is of even greater importance. It is for this reason that Gülen's tolerance stemming from the teaching of *sunnah* is being charged with a greater mission. The Prophetic *sunnah* created a safe and secure environment and established good relations and cooperation between members of various religions and cultures. When the Prophet died, his armour was still pawned with a Jew, and recovered only after the companions paid his debt. This incident shows the extent of the relations between communities from commerce to finances. The application of the *sunnah* presents important messages to the present day and future Muslims. The world of the future is projecting a support for a real and modern understanding integrated with global values through tolerance rather than an introverted society. The most important criterion here is the acceptance of all individuals in their own status regardless of their creed, colour, culture and language. It is none other than this reality that is needed in this century and that will be needed in the future. The insurance for the salvation of the

humanity—for the present and the future—is, in a single word, *sunnah*-based tolerance and dialogue. It should also be noted that Gülen easily negates many insiders' (Muslims) criticism against his pro-interfaith-dialogue activities by referencing to *sunnah.* Bringing countless anecdotes from the life of the Prophet regarding inter-religious dialogue, he silences some opponents to go further in their criticism. In addition, as mentioned above, Gülen is not dogmatic or just theoretical person but put his ideas and views into practice. He is, as Sarıtoprak has stated, socialises the theology by creating many areas and fields to implement his opinions. He is a unique Muslims in modern world who practices the notion of theology of social responsibility in more than 160 countries.

Interpretations regarding terrorism and suicide bombers

This section will be focusing on Islam and the perception of terrorism, taking into account Gülen's evaluation, and the approach and point of view of the *sunnah* towards terrorism. The main theme will be constructed through topics that touch upon the tolerance of terrorism in Islam, the place of suicide bombers in the *sunnah*, and methods illustrated by the *sunnah* to solve problems.

The definition of *jihad* in Islam and Gülen's approach

Many Islamic terms are frequently used out of context by different mediums to describe the supposed violent fundamentals of the religion. With the term *jihad* taking the lead, some of the Islamic values being used as slogans by terrorist and some biased groups cause Islam to be frequently mentioned and associated with terrorism. Terrorists and terrorist groups feel the need to rely on religious entities in order to build on valid or well-founded grounds and express themselves clearly.[761] Therefore, convincing militants with "Islamist" rhetoric becomes a simpler task. It is especially

[761] Hamza Aktan, " Kur'ân Ve Sünnet Işığında Terör Ve İntihar Eylemleri," *Yeni Umit* 63(Ocak, Şubat, Mart 2004).

easier for an uneducated individual who was not raised with or sustained by religious resources to be convinced to take part in terrorist acts. Hence, if the term "Islamist" is going to be used to describe a devout Muslim who is well informed of the Islamic resources, it should be considered that according to Islamic values, a person with such consciousness cannot be a terrorist.

On the other hand, it is not seen to be possible to associate acts of terror with the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Despite the term being used to define terror, attacks and barbarity, *jihad* in the Islamic literature is explained as striving in the way of God.[762] *Jihad* is the name of every religious, scholarly or financial struggle undertaken to share the beliefs and values of Islam with mankind. This includes the efforts of the lettered and knowledgeable to educate others, the generosity the wealthy display, the energy the healthy exert to serve humankind, and even the intrinsic battle one experiences to appease his carnal desires.[763] If the time and place requires so, *jihad* could also be defined as any written or verbal disagreement with or endeavours against disbelief including evidence-oriented arguments, seminars, conferences and articles.[764] Further expanding on his explanation, Gülen says: "*Jihad* is not the method or approach used by terrorists who threaten people and generate fright and terror to the society. It is also not the name of the method of crude people such as bandits. *Jihad* is the lifestyle of people who are in a constant struggle to nourish their beliefs and improve it to a state that is loved and appreciated by God.[765] It is the definition of achieving a higher rank in God's eyes by introducing and familiarising humankind

[762] M.Fethullah Gülen, "What is Jihad," (13 September 2001), http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/faith/questions-and-answers/24522-what-is-jihad?highlight=WyJqaWhhZCJd.
[763] Aktan, " Kur'ân Ve Sünnet Işığında Terör Ve İntihar Eylemleri."
[764] Şükran Vahide, "Said Nursî'nin Cihat Yorumu," (1970), http://www.ufkumuz.com/said-nursinin-cihat-yorumu-2708h.htm
[765] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Hitap Çiçekleri* (*Blossoms of Declamation)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 1995).p,105

with Him using a soft and insightful manner.[766] Furthermore, *jihad* is any attempt of an individual to prevent and clear barriers that might harm the personal bond created between him and God. It is making belief a natural and vital part of one's life.

Considering the above clarifications of the term, it could be said that the approach of Gülen and many other thinkers is in correspondence with the following *hadith*: "Perform *jihad* against disbelievers with speech and representation of your beliefs."[767] When the issue is examined from this perspective, it could be seen that *jihad* is the name given to the more spiritual dimension of *sunnah*, and hence claimed that it is impossible for acts of terror to be derived from or rooted in the *sunnah*.

Gülen believes that weapons, tyranny and provoking terror will neither aid in communicating ideas, nor will it be effective in solving problems. According to him, the path to global unity or the domination of a nation passes through embracing the spirit of dialogue, faith and belief. If people are forced to say "at your service" with armed forces, nuclear power, electronic systems or invasions, this cannot be considered a victory.[768] On the contrary, it will curtain the values of Islam and build barriers between inter-faith dialogue. In an atmosphere that does not allow faith to become intrinsic and people to be truly convinced and satisfied with reasoning, enmity will only fade to resurface at a later stage.

Gülen's thought on jihad is also seen to be closely related with a *hadith* narrated by Abu Dharr. Upon asking the Prophet which deed is more virtuous, this companion receives the following answer[769]: "*Jihad* in the sense of believing in God, and striving to spread His religion and your faith with speech and representation."[770]

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[766] *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler -3* (*Questions and Answers)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2010).p.194-198
[767] Abu Dawud, *Jihad*," 18 (2504); Nasa'î, "*Jihad"*, 1 (6,7), Kutub-u Sittah, v, 67.
[768] Gülen, *Hitap Çiçekleri*.p, 106
[769] ibid.106
[770] Buhari, *adab*;1

Therefore, the s*unnah* shows *jihad* as the maturation and spreading of knowledge through reflections it has on one's character and manners.

Terrorism and the approach of the Qur'an and *sunnah* to *jihad*

There is no concurrency between the Qur'an and the ongoing acts of terrorism and assassinations equated with *jihad*. "It is because of this that We ordained for (all humankind, but particularly for) the Children of Israel: He who kills a soul unless it be (in legal punishment) for murder or for causing disorder and corruption on the earth will be as if he had killed all humankind; and he who saves a life will be as if he had saved the lives of all humankind…"[771] God does not permit the killing of a person by any individual, especially in a situation where the act is undeserved. If anything, He encourages people to live by principles that help them live their own lives whilst sustaining the lives of others. Even if an individual is deserving of a severe punishment, the above verse of the Qur'an only licenses the justice system with a right to practice harsh penalties. It therefore prevents chaos or events of terror that may break out between individuals or societies as a whole.

Along with this, it is observed that permission for physical *jihad*- only within circumstances of self-defence- was given after Prophet Muhammad's migration to Medina thirteen years after the commencement of his Prophethood.

"The believers against whom war is waged are given permission to fight in response, for they have been wronged. Surely, God has full power to help them to victory".[772] As can be drawn from the verse, the concept of war in Islam can only be constructed on the need for defence; even within this system, the decision for self-defence and war can only be made by the willpower of the government that the society is ruled by. According to Gülen, individuals do not have the right to announce physical *jihad*

[771] Qur'an, 5.32.
[772] Qur'an, 22:39

based on their own personal interests.[773] It is also against Islamic law for an individual to declare war on his own accord. [774] This could only be called an act of terror. Hence, it is impossible for Islam to be truly associated with any expressions of terrorism.

Just as every other nation or community, Muslims have the right to defend themselves and protect their dignity by eliminating threats posed by intelligence and attacks. The number of big and minor wars and military actions Prophet Muhammad commanded himself or appointed commanders for from amongst the Companions exceeds sixty. However, he was not the attacking party in any of these situations.[775] This means that he had never attacked a tribe of idol-worshippers or unbelievers due to their values; his attempts were always aimed at self defence and predicting attacks to render them futile before they developed into larger threats.

During the Meccan times, the belief, representation and speech aspects of *jihad* seem to have been more prominent. During this period, the religion was lived and represented by the Prophet and his Companions for thirteen years. Hence, the lifestyle that Gülen encourages contemporary Muslims to adopt is one that resembles the Prophet's practice during his time in Mecca. What was intrinsic during the Meccan period was the "Dar al-Arqam service", which was a system of houses in which Prophet Muhammad gave lessons to his Companions by speaking of and representing his knowledge in order to furnish their souls and raise awareness of the religion revealed.[776] In exchange for an educated Muslim who is capable of thinking, contemplating and questioning, it is important for such a system to be implemented and regarded as a necessary value by the society. During the Meccan period, it was essential neither to show fear nor to reciprocate violence when exposed to threats and

[773] Gülen, *Yenilenme Cehdi, (Endeavor for Renewal) Kırık Testi* p, *12*.267.
[774] Nuriye Akman, *Gurbette Fethullah Gülen*, Fethullah Gülen Teröre Panzehir Sunuyor (Istanbul: Zaman Kitap, 2004).
[775] Aktan, " Kur'ân Ve Sünnet Işığında Terör Ve İntihar Eylemleri."
[776] Gülen, *Hitap Çiçekleri*. p, 105

attacks. As related by His daughter Fatima, the exemplary patience the Prophet showed when tripe was placed on his head during salah, when he was stoned on the streets or he had soil thrown at him[777] was an aspect of this reality.[778]

Attention should be drawn on the fact that such actions were done to provoke Prophet Muhammad and his Companions and would have caused civil war in case of any retaliation. Either case of victory or defeat might have damaged the Prophet's mission of spreading the divine religion; at such an early age, defeat would have diminished the values Muslims held due to their small numbers, and a victory would have eliminated willpower and imprisoned freedom of thought to dominion.

Suicide, suicide bombings and the approach of the *sunnah*

According to Gülen, suicide and the torturous killing of a person equates to disbelief. A person who commits suicide is considered to have tortured the life that was given to him as a trust from God; for humankind is expected to protect his life to the best of his abilities.[779] The Prophet draws attention to this fact with the comment he makes about Quzman, whom committed suicide during the battle of Uhud: "He is of the people of Hellfire!" [780] Some scholars consider people who have committed suicide as apostates and declare that the funeral prayer for them cannot be performed.[781] Therefore, Gülen believes that a person with deep-seated faith can neither commit suicide nor become a suicide bomber. In this case, one who takes his own or another's life will have a thin line between disbelief and himself, and will be face to face with a high risk of losing his faith. His characteristics will no longer allow

[777] Bukhari, *Wudû* 69/Muslim, *Jihad*, 107-108
[778] Gülen, *Hitap Çiçekleri*.p, 105-106.
[779] *Yenilenme Cehdi, Kırık Testi 12*.p, 263.
[780] at-Tabarî, *Târîhu'l-umam va'l-muluk* 2/73.
[781] Gülen, *Yenilenme Cehdi, Kırık Testi 12*.p, 265.

an attribution to his Islamic beliefs. Thereby, a person who dies as a suicide bomber and causes the death of others cannot be a true Muslim. [782]

This individual is not a believer at the time of murder; one who commits this sin with such a state of mind, spiritual condition, plan and fantasy cannot be called a 'Muslim'. The *sunnah* defines these borders with the following truths; "A servant of God is not a true believer in the instant of adultery … and is not a believer when he is taking the life of another." [783] These act as principles in setting the cornerstones of peace amongst a society.

Gülen states that the crimes committed by a suicide bomber who has caused the death of many innocent cannot in any way be linked with the Islamic faith.[784] According to him, although nations such as Palestine have faced many hardships, the suicide bombings they have organised cannot be acceptable. Proceeding an attack without a specific target, mounting bombs onto oneself with an intention of killing and pulling the dowel amongst innocent people cannot be classified as an act with Islamic motives. Islam has set rules regarding how to die or battle against the enemy even during the most violent moments of war. For there is no verdict in Islam that allows the killing of women, children and any people who are not actually participants of the ongoing war.[785] Every individual's right to live is under protection with the Islamic law. Prophet Muhammad's orders during the conquerance of Mecca can be appraised within the same sphere: "You are not to battle with or kill anyone as long as you are not faced with violent resistance and attacks!" [786]

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[782] Fethullah Gulen, "A Real Muslim cannot be a Terrorist," (5 October 2004), https://www.fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/toward-a-global-civilization-of-love-and-tolerance/jihad-terrorism-human-rights/25259-real-muslims-cannot-be-terrorists
[783] Nasâî, *qasâma* 48, 49, *qat' al-sâriq* 1; Abd al-Razzaq, *al-Musannaf* 7/415; Ibn Abî Shayba, *al-Musannaf* 6/169.
[784] Gülen, *Yenilenme Cehdi, Kırık Testi 12*.p, 267.
[785] *Gurbet Ufukları,(Horizons of Foreign Land) Kırık Testi-3*.p, 179
[786] Ibn Hisham, *Sirah*, c. 4, s. 51.

The principles that Islam has on the matter of bloodshed are remarkable in every aspect. A father has the right to disown and deprive of inheritance a child who is a murderer or a terrorist. [787] En masse, these morals illustrated by the Qur'an and *sunnah* are important factors in maintaining communal peace.

When asked whether it was the desire for heaven that encouraged Muslims to become suicide commandos, Gülen replied: "If people are acting with such deliberations, it means they have guided themselves rather wrongly. For whoever attempts such a crime will find himself falling into Hell, not Heaven." [788] According to Gülen, these types of people are murderers who are unaware of the essence of the religion. Whilst committing a deed that belongs to Hell by killing themselves, they are held accountable for the deaths of the children, women, men, Muslims and non-Muslims and will be asked to pay the price by God in the Hereafter.[789] Speaking on the grounds of such contemplation, Gülen claims; "One of the people I despise most and hold contempt against in this world is Usama Bin Laden for he has stained the luminous face of Islam."[790] and condemns the 9/11 attacks with the following words: "No terrorist can be a Muslim, and no true Muslim can be a terrorist".[791] When his work is examined it can be seen that due to his moral standing, Gülen does not make statements about public figures, and that it is only towards this name that he uses words of contempt. Gülen also poses his disapproving attitude of Bin Laden and his followers by stating: "No organisation or individual can decide on *jihad* on their own accord." [792]Considering Gülen's unswerving approach to the issue, it could be said

[787] Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla 1(From Chapter to Chapter)*.p, 278
[788] *Yenilenme Cehdi,(Endeavor for Renewal) Kırık Testi 12*.p, 268.
[789] ibid.267
[790] Gülen, "A Real Muslim cannot be a Terrorist".
[791] ibid.
[792] *Gurbette Fethullah Gülen*, ed. Nuh Gönültaş, Türkiye'nin Başka Fethullah Gülen'i Yok (Istanbul: Zaman Kitap 2004).117.

that the *sunnah* does not leave any doors ajar to terrorism or the forming of terrorist groups in any way.[793]

It is verified through historical records that even whilst enduring the toughest oppression in Mecca, Prophet Muhammad always advised patience and was an embodiment of peace and compromise. He always preferred refraining from being the side that provoked or caused disputes. Hence, the famous poet of the Age of Ignorance, Imru al-Qays' modality becomes of use in shedding light on the issue: "There are two things that you cannot halt at your will once you ignite them: Fire and war!.." [794]

The *Sunnah*'s Influence on Conflict Resolution

According to Gülen, the *sunnah* ascribes every individual with the responsibility of preventing possible harm. In situations where physical intervention is not an option in stopping an action disputing the *sunnah*, it is advised that one must approach the issue with wise words and counsel. If intervention by the tongue is also not possible, one must at least despise the act by heart and show no affirmation. Issues should be looked to be handled from this triangle, for the Prophet says: "When one of you witness wrongdoing, he should make it right with his hands. If he cannot achieve this, he should advise that the act is wrong and try to prevent the harm. If he is not able to carry this out either, he must at least feel the weight of the misdoing in his conscience and be able to lament; for this last one is the lowest degree of faith."[795] With this principle, Prophet Muhammad is seen to bring measures to what individuals can do to prevent damage.[796]

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[793] Gülen, *Yaşatma İdeali*. p, 212,213.
[794] Gülen, *Vuslat Muştusu Kırık Testi-8*. p, 229.
[795] Muslim, *imân* 78; Tirmidhî, *fitan* 11; Abu Dawud, *salat* 239.
[796] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Diriliş Çağrısı,(A Call to Revival) Kırık Testi-6* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 38.

Putting forward the first segment of the *hadith* about 'physical intervention' as enough verification, some may begin a quest to establish their own ways of justice. Thus, Gülen brings clarity to this crucial point in his work. As claimed by Islamic scholars, the right to the power of physical intervention only belongs to the government;[797] every individual is obligated to consult the government regarding this point. However, Gülen's take of this facet of the *hadith* is more interesting. He places more importance on being a powerful nation that owns a potent justice system, instead of confining oneself to being a third class community that accepts living under the rules of a nondescript regime. Hence, he believes in assigning responsibilities to every citizen for their country to earn an important global status. [798] A government that is constructed by communities well- founded in and equipped with knowledge and spirituality will be a system in which terrorism will find no opportunity to surface. In view of this, Gülen stresses that all the problems humanity faces can be resolved with proper education. In a sense, he points to education as the perpetrator and says: "It is the fault of education. Education was the instrument that could have prevented these matters. That is to say, Islamic education has thus far not reached its potential and has been a failure. We have not been able to teach humankind how to refrain from evil and adopt kindness for the sake of God."[799]

With this comment, Gülen shows his persistence about the necessity of sparing time for education although it may take a long period of time. This also illustrates that the focal point of his mission is education.

[797] ibid.
[798] ibid.
[799] Akman, *Gurbette Fethullah Gülen*.

Retaliating to acts of terror within the society with similar tactics will only intensify the ongoing violence and increase the friction.[800] However, it is not possible to speak of such violence amongst a society that is made up of educated individuals.

Gülen draws attention to the fact that under the condition of protecting national dignity, the opposing party could be communicated with in order to solve problems, bring about peace and prevent terror.[801] According to him, the paths to peace should be founded and framed to maintain harmony between nations and countries. Thus, he states: "the good lays in peace and peace is always beneficial"[802] commenting on the Quranic verse "Peace brings goodness (and certainly, it is the greatest of goodness.)"[803]

Based on Gülen's commentary, it could be understood that compromise is seen as a principle in establishing communal harmony; it is the only way to ease all-encompassing peace. At this point, Prophet Muhammad's character and *sunnah* serve as important resources in shaping Gülen's ideology.[804] To him, these two resources contain veritable parameters in the name of solving problems for the safety of humankind.

Throughout history, di spute, war and terror have never been a useful part of any equation assembled to solve the problems of the society. They have always brought about unrest and division, diminishing any values that could have coexisted and destroying any bridges that could have been the meeting point of different nations and cultures.

[800] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*. p, 123.
[801] *Vuslat Muştusu Kırık Testi-8*. p, 230.
[802] M. Fethulah Gülen, "Sulh Hayırdır, Hayır Sulhtadır," herkul.org, http://www.herkul.org/herkul-nagme/195-nagme-sulh-hayirdir/.
[803] Qur'an, 4:128
[804] Gülen, *İnsanlığın İftihar Tablosu, Sonsuz Nur-2*. p,123.

It is not possible for any arguments or rationale put forward by terrorist groups formed under the name of *jihad* to fall back on examples from the *sunnah*. There are no loopholes in the fundamental *hadith* collections that could be utilised as the breeding grounds of terrorism. Nevertheless, methods put forward to solve problems through education, dialogue, respect and religious morals are innumerable. These values have formed and are still forming refuge islands for those seeking peace.

Chapter Five: Gülen as a student of *hadith.*

Gülen's teachers and his works

The previous sections of the thesis focused on examining the *sunnah* and Gülen's understanding of the *sunnah* in both classical and modern framework. In this chapter, attention will be drawn to the background that influenced Gülen's acquisition in *hadith* science, and the figures and reasons that encouraged him to follow the s*unnah*. This objective will assist in introducing the Gülen ideology that has motivated a large- scale community to take action upon approaches presented to resolve the century's issues. At this juncture, the portrait of the profiles that Gülen seeks to represent with his works will be faintly illustrated, as the factors and methods that motivate Gülen to take action have the potency to set cornerstones for the s*unnah*- oriented education of future generations.

Along with this, the books and theories that Gülen follows regarding the learning and teaching of the *sunnah* will also be focused on. This will enable one to detect and take note of techniques of teaching the *sunnah* that may be suitable for the current era.

Gülen's teachers

Firstly, it is important to understand the exemplary human profile that also influenced Gülen's life. Some of his remarks may be considered as descriptive of the

profile he seeks to see. The following comment is an example that points to the human prototype he aims for; "A person is of value the further he stands from harbouring negative feelings... The physical facet of good manners can be observed by anyone; the main point is to nurture your thoughts and feelings to elevate your true character."[805] When his activities are carefully examined, it can be seen that this criterion becomes an embodiment, and is an answer to the type of exemplary person he imagines. When viewed from this point, it can be said that the factors that influence him in both a spiritual and scholarly sense are the *sunnah*, moral figures and his teachers.

Growing up to listen to the lives of his grandfathers recounted by his elders has had a large impact on the wisdom and morale of Gülen. Molla Ahmed, Şamil Ağa and his grandmother are symbols of righteousness with a religious lifestyle that has reflected on Gülen's own life. The respect that his father Ramiz Efendi had towards scholars and the *sunnah* has also left permanent impressions on Gülen's manners and spiritual life. He remembers his father as one who constantly occupied himself with worship and knowledge.[806] His father's two-year retreat away from his village to do further study and earn fluency in Arabic and Persian was also a significant impact on Gülen's eagerness to learn. Along with this, his mother's efforts to help him learn how to read the Qur'an at the age of four despite the restrictive and deterring rules of the government has evidently settled in his conscience.[807] Being the first teacher in his life, Gülen's mother draws attention to his outstanding memory, claiming that even

[805] *Ölçü Ve Yoldaki Işıklar*.(*Pearls of Wisdom*) p, 167
[806] fgulen.com, "Years of Education," (15. September. 2001), http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-life/1304-biography/24652-years-of-education?hitcount=0.
[807] Erdoğan, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi, Küçük Dünyam*.

during his childhood, he would be able to memorise a section of a book after reading it once or twice.[808]

It could be said that Gülen's interest and enthusiasm towards Islamic studies were further triggered by the pressure of the prohibitions set by the government against religious education. Due to this, Gülen showed effort to further prosper with every scholar that visited his home; and with the negative societal and governmental structure that surrounded him throughout his adolescence, it could be claimed that he naturally developed an idea of a new community that revolved around the axis of the *sunnah*.

As mentioned before, alongside the discipline and manners he acquired from his family, Gülen's childhood and youth were also influenced by various scholarly figures. Imam of Alvar Mehmed Lutfi Afandi (d. 1956), Vehbi Afandi, Sirri Afandi of the Tagi sheikhs, Shahabaddin Afandi, Halil Hoja and Harun Afandi are amongst the characters that Gülen has benefited from.[809] However, Gülen refers to Mehmed Lutfi Afandi of Alvar, as the person from whom he received the foundations of his spiritual and scholarly sustenance until the age of 16. His unshakable adherence to the *sunnah* and the companions of the Prophet was also ingrained by this figure in his life.[810] The following words of Mehmed Lutfi Afandi of Alvar seem to mark the beginning of a revival in Gülen: "Heedlessness is the biggest disaster to fall upon humanity"[811] Such expressions of the scholar have given rise to Gülen's desire to restore the Prophet's *sunnah* as a lifestyle. Gülen frequently cites his teacher throughout his works,

[808] fgulen.com, "Fethullah Gülen'in Muallâ Validesi Merhume Refia Gülen," fgulen.com, http://fgulen.com/tr/fethullah-gulen-kimdir/gulen-hakkinda/fethullah-guleni-taniyanlardan/166-fgulen-com-Fethullah-Gulenin-Mualla-Validesi-Merhume-Refia-Gulen?hitcount=0.
[809] Erdoğan, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi, Küçük Dünyam*.
[810] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen, bir Portre Denemesi* p, 495.
[811] ibid. 121.

presenting him as an exemplary figure. With this approach, he aims to keep historical personas alive in the memories of communities.

Works that he has read

Written works that Gülen reads can be classified into two groups; 'positive' knowledge, which relates to an accumulation of encyclopaedic wisdom, and knowledge of the Sharia, which encompasses books about Arabic grammar, eloquence, *hadith*, tafsir and Islamic law. He has read books about the anatomy of Arabic words which include *Amthila, Bina, Maksud, Izzi* and *Marah*; and a collection of books about the structure of sentences which comprise of *Awamil, Izhar*, *Kafiya* and *Molla Jami*. Of these, it is known that he has memorised *Awamil and Kafiy*a.[812] Besides practice, memorising is observed to be the most efficient method of learning the Arabic language, and this method shows similarity to the way the companion kept record of the *hadith* they heard. Being used by Gülen to also keep a mental note of *hadith*s, this method has a high chance of having originated from the s*unnah*, as speech and the learning of a language is dependent on practice rather than memory.[813]

Gülen has also read *Multaqa al- Abhur* on Islamic science, *Mir'atu al-Usul* on Islamic law, *Talkhis, Mukhtasar al- Ma'ani* and a book of *Majma' al- Mutun* on eloquence, Aliyyu'l-Qari, a section of *Bad' al-Amali* by Ushi on pronunciation, and Qadi Baydavi's book named *Tavali' al-Anvar*. From amongst these masterpieces, he has memorised *Talhis* and the mentioned section from *Bad' al Amali*. Alongside these, he has read books on tafsir (interpretation) and logic such as *Jalaleyn* and Qadi Baydavi's *Anwar al--Tanzil, Mughni al-Tullab*, and Imam Busiri's *Qasida al-Burda*. Regarding *hadith* science, he has read majority of the books to be mentioned in the

[812] Cemal Türk Ergün Çapan, "Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Bilinmeyen Bir Yönü: Ders Ve Tedris Metodu," *Yeni Umit* 89(Temmuz-Ağustos-Eylül 2010).
[813] Discussion with Fethullah Gülen's student Cuma Ördü, *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*, 26.July.2014.

following sections.[814] When it is considered that he learnt how to read the Qur'an at the age of 4, and had memorised it by the age of 12, a conviction about Gülen's healthy analysis of Islamic sciences could be established. It is possible to reach this conclusion about a pool of knowledge that was first formed at an early age and updated consistently.

It is known that alongside his extensive background in Islamic knowledge, Gülen has also read majority of the written masterpieces about Turkish, Western and world literature. In addition, his ability to compare different perspectives on history, philosophy and social sciences with his detailed knowledge of the fields is outstanding.[815]

Gülen as a teacher of *hadith* and his teaching methods

In order to comprehend Gülen's understanding of *hadith* and the *sunnah*, it is important to educate and be educated by the wisdom of the *sunnah*, to understand issues like the role of teachers and students, and to examine Gülen's approach to all of these. Hence, it is important to analyse Gülen's perspective on such issues before examining his method of teaching the *Sunnah*.

A scholar in the Islamic tradition according to Gülen

Due to the manners he was brought up by, Gülen considers the Prophet`s *sunnah* as a role model for educators. In Gülen`s approach, the Prophet is a teacher whose manners are cultivated by God's.[816] He is an educator who is able to respond to every individual and community's needs accurately.[817] He is also one of the Messengers who is able to channel wisdom and knowledge to people through

[814] "Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Bilinmeyen bir Yönü: Ders ve Tedris Metodu."
[815] Muhammed Şarkâvî, "Klasik ve Modern Ilimleri Sentezleyen Alim," *Zaman Newspaper* 1 Temmuz 2014.
[816] "My God cultivated me, and goodly cultivated" Ali al-Muttaqî, *Kanz al-Ummal*, 11/406.
[817] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ Ve Nesil 1* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2009).p, 122.

representation. Therefore, it is possible to find doctrines and principles of education that apply to people of every level in the Prophet's methods.[818] When this angle is examined, it could be concluded that teachers are the people who could raise and protect an orderly community.[819] An educator is one who teaches manners through representing them, using love, compassion, tolerance and respect as educational criteria. The cultivation of one's character is an affair that is addressed and studied by people competent in the field of mysticism.[820] However, it is considered the most important aspect of education today. It is seen that Gülen is in a constant struggle to represent this affair through methods resourced from the *sunnah*. However, a teacher is one who strives to elevate student's potential to make him/her useful to humanity throughout a programmed time. If this matter is to be one's journey through education, this would manifest in all education levels. A teacher needs to be able to foresee this time course and prepare the student for events that he/she may come across throughout his/her life.[821] In this instance, one remembers the Prophet's devotion towards his ummah (people) and hence his agility towards protecting and educating them by warning them of incidents that may take place in the future (the news He has given about future events should always be taken into account). This strengthens the possibility that the importance Gülen places on the focus on improving a student's chastity throughout his education roots from *sunnah*.

Through his following statement, Gülen aims to imply that a teacher should also be an educator: "Teaching is different to educating. Anyone can become a teacher if they wish, but only a minority will be able to earn the title of an educator."[822] In short, Gülen believes that the term 'teacher' should also be able to

[818] ibid.123.
[819] ibid.114.
[820] *Yol Mülahazaları,(Contemplating the Journey) Prizma 6*. p,135
[821] *Kırık Testi-1(The Broken Jug)*.p, 135.
[822] *Ölçü Ve Yoldaki Işıklar*.p, 169

carry the essence of an educator. For in the implementation of the *sunnah*, Prophet Muhammad played the role of both a teacher and an educator that protected and watched over his Companions and community. According to Gülen, a teacher is a guide who is able to encourage, teach and lead to what is right with patience and persistence.[823] Hence, Gülen holds teachers and educators equal and encourages unity.[824] Herewith, by adopting the essence of an educator, a teacher would be able to conquer the hearts of students and create an atmosphere they could seek refuge in when they encounter difficulties. In an environment as such, problems will not find ground that will allow them to develop any further.

In the modern period, technologies that are accepted as educational resources such as newspapers, books, radio, television and the internet can only contribute to a certain extent. However, there can only be one resource for an educator who works on improving his student's mental and spiritual welfare with love and respect. Nothing could healthily replace the role of such a figure.[825] It is with this understanding that an educational institution can be transformed into a place where physics, science and social studies are tools in reading the universe. Otherwise, it cannot be said that the institution and its teachers will function to fulfil expectations, as the students will only be fed with theoretical information.[826] When closely examined, it is seen that Gülen strives to enrich the principles of education by emphasising the importance of love and sincerity. He searches for ways to solve the problems and approach the spirituality of students who are thrown into self-centeredness and solitude with the materialism surrounding them. Hence, he has belief that problems can be solved through a relationship between teachers and students constructed on mutual love and

[823] *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan, Çağ Ve Nesil -2* (*Humankind, Eras and Generations within a Whirlpool of Crises)* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p,104
[824] *Ölçü Ve Yoldaki Işıklar*.(*Pearls of Wisdom*). p, 169.
[825] *Çağ Ve Nesil 1*.p. 115
[826] ibid. 91.

respect. When this ideology is evaluated through the following *hadith*, it is certain that Gülen's method of cultivating the manners of a person is founded by his reliance on the ways of Prophet Muhammad; "He who does not show affection towards youth and he who does not show respect towards the elderly is not one of us".[827]

Along with this, within the system of education he has woven, Gülen does not neglect people of different religions and cultures, and tries to relate to them by presenting them with examples that concern their native values. As a result, growing familiar with the values of the community he was raised in assists a student in discovering his own identity. An example of Gülen's tolerance and respect is his belief in and his adoption of the principles of Prophet Jesus, who is an important figure in Christendom. According to Gülen, Prophet Jesus advised patience and gentleness to his disciples even at the time of his crucifixion, and has thus displayed a righteous mission.[828] Through such tolerance he shows towards different traditions and beliefs, Gülen proves that he does not agree with having any boundaries in the criteria set for both providing and receiving an education, and that he is ready to be accepting of positive values regardless of which culture they originate from. Although it is a weak narrative when evaluated with the *hadith* criterion, Gülen is seen to point to the following saying frequently; "Seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China"[829] It is possible that Gülen's values have been influenced by similar *hadith*. During the time of Prophet Muhammad, tribes living in the same geography held beliefs such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Brahmanism and Shintoism. However, due to the respect he had towards these tribes and their religions, he does not show nearby provinces as a target in the previous *hadith*, but points to a land then unknown to them

[827] Tirmidhî, *Birr*, 15; Abû Dâwûd, *Sunan*, Adab, 66
[828] Gülen, *Çağ Ve Nesil 1*. p, 115.
[829] al-Bayhaqî, *Shuab al-îmân* 2/253; Ibn Abd al-Barr, *Jâmi' Bayân al-ilm* s.9; Jâmi' al-Saghîr, 1/310, H. No: 640

for the most part.[830] Hence, he accepts every culture and religion with its own essence, and emphasises the knowledge and wisdom to be learnt from each. A teacher with the characteristics of an educator will be capable of finding ways of teaching the right kind of knowledge whilst keeping his respect towards other perspectives intact.

Gülen's teaching methods

Which method does Gülen, who summarises education by defining the difference between an educator and a teacher, use to teach his personal students? Does his approach share similarities or show differences to known methods?

Gülen's lessons to exclusive circles of students started within his first year of working as an imam (prayer leader). Keeping within the boundaries of the s*unnah*, he prefers keeping track of his students and meeting their needs personally. Despite his old age (77), Gülen has not abandoned this approach. Within this understanding of education, the numbers of Gülen's students are subject to change every year and are usually a group of 10-18 people. Elected students are usually graduates of theology[831] who are proficient in Islamic sciences, as Gülen's lessons are of a structure that further master and expand on the details of content learnt at the faculty. After undertaking the studies for a certain period of time (which differs between 1-4 years), students who are willing to raise their own pupils or undertake further study in a field of research are permitted to leave the circle.

Daily discussions are held for 3 hours in the early and productive hours of each morning. During the remaining times of the day, the students review the lectures given and prepare for the content of the next lesson. The time is also utilised by reading the books recommended by Gülen and researching about any progress made

[830] Gülen, *Kalp Ibresi*.(*The Heart's Cursor).* p, 240-241
[831] Gülen sometimes allowed graduates of science to attend his lessons. He asked for their opinions whilst interpreting *hadith*.

in the world of science.[832] The fact that students mostly reside in the same location as Gülen is comparable to the traditional madrasah education, whilst the atmosphere created with the daily routines evoke the culture of a darvish lodge.[833] Hence, the system followed by Gülen shares many similarities with long-established methods of education. At this point, it is also important to indicate that Gülen spares 3-4 minutes for prayer before each lesson, spiritually preparing his students for the session.[834] When such elements of his work are taken into account, it is seen that Gülen considers Prophet Muhammad and his Companions as his main resource and role model. Throughout the books he has authored, Gülen frequently expresses that he intends to persevere with the teaching system that he has established under the light of the *sunnah*.

During his *hadith* lesson, Gülen opts to examine masterpieces written on *hadith* and elaborate on aspects that concern the contemporary time. In conjunction with this, he concentrates on the teaching of *Rijal* (a study of the reporters of *hadith*), which is a discipline he finds to be important in comprehending the science of *hadith*. Although it is a field that has been abandoned by researchers today, Gülen persists on educating his students on this matter and discusses every reporter of *hadith* mentioned in the chain. In order to achieve this and make his students well versed in the field, Gülen emphasises the main characteristics of each narrator of every *hadith*.[835] Along with this, the *hadith* is studied closely and its health, weak points, decrees that have been or may be drawn from it and commentaries made regarding it are all analysed

[832] Interview with Fethullah Gülen's student Recep Doğan, *Regarding Fethullah Gülen's Teaching Methods in Islamic Science* 2. July. 2014.
[833] A place where sessions of prayers, dhikr and religious or scientific discussions are held.
[834] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.
[835] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 82.

before the *hadith*s are made and new commentaries are made. Gülen also adds assumptions of what the *hadith* may have implied for its own era to his evaluations.[836]

It is also important to mention that Gülen studies different books every term with different groups of students and hence makes it possible to cover all the written pieces that have been recorded under the field of *hadith* and Islamic sciences.[837] The books that Gülen has utilised as resources whilst teaching *hadith* science will be further explained under a future title.

Lesson preparations

It is a common practice today for teachers to encourage students to prepare for the class before they attend. Although it is difficult to enforce this upon large classes in short amounts of time, it is still considered to be a method that is the key to success. This practice also stands out amongst Gülen's method of teaching. In his chain of lessons, the student prepares for the content to be studied in the next class from beforehand. Some of these preparations include learning the meanings of each voweling, the characteristics of each verb and noun in the text, the meanings of the words in the *hadith*, pronunciations.[838] In essence, it is important for the student to have understood the context and be able to generate questions. This allows him to contribute effectively and be independent of archaic knowledge and hence, the ground for new and revised commentary is established.

On the other hand, the student reads the notes he makes prior to the lesson and Gülen makes explanations wherever he sees the need to. The topic is also compared to other relevant masterpieces. For example, Bukhari's books of commentary are read

[836] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.
[837] ibid.
[838] *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 79.

during *hadith* classes and their characteristics are discussed in detail.[839] Questions asked during this time avail in benefiting from new and unique commentary made by Gülen.[840]

As mentioned before, this method that Gülen applies shares similarities with methods practiced by the traditional education system, demonstrating that the system he was raised by is still applicable for today's age. Unlike this system, however, Gülen does not place the main focus on memorising the *nahw* rules of the Arabic language but rather prefers to concentrate on its vital sections.[841] By means of this, the quick-wit of the students is challenged to improve, and the wasting of time that memorising usually causes is prevented. Hence, Gülen strives to follow a more efficient way of teaching whilst ensuring that his students have the competency to study an extensive range of topics. As this encourages his pupils to practice perseverance, it creates a more resourceful system of education that is constructed under the light of traditions.

Summarising

Another method that Gülen practices is summarising, which is seen to be influenced by examples from the Qur'an and manner of the *sunnah* (which is expressing the ultimate with minimal wording). On the one hand, God taught Prophet Adam the necessary knowledge and wisdom in summary and Gülen draws attention to the fact that whilst knowledge of sciences was also given to Prophet Muhammad in brief, the *sunnah* was responsible for explanations of the details where relevant.[842] On the other hand, it could be seen that Prophet Adam presenting the angels with a summary of the universe by teaching them the names of creations (with God's

[839] Ergün Çapan, "Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Bilinmeyen Bir Yönü: Ders Ve Tedris Metodu."
[840] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 79.
[841] *Regarding Fethullah Gülen's Teaching Methods in Islamic Science*
[842] Gülen, *Kur'an'nın Altın İkliminde*.p, 30.

permission) meant he was acquainted with extensive knowledge condensed with essentials.[843] Hence, Gülen decides that learning something with its abstract is of underestimated value. Summarising also hastens intellectual development and the ability to reason, whilst preventing mental inertia.

With this way of thought, Gülen draws attention to the impossibility of reading all the written masterpieces and the ease offered by learning with summaries. Hence, he encourages every student to summarise the book given to one twentieth.[844] By doing this, Gülen aims to achieve a collective understanding of the topic being taught, which in turn also aids in utilising time effectively and prevents waste of time. By this means, a result that is not mutually or collectively achieved can be abandoned for the better.

In order to raise students well versed in science, Gülen recommends for every book in the relevant fields to be made available to students and be distributed evenly to small groups. This aims to summarise, analyse and hence recompose large numbers of written works.[845] This procedure being followed by every student, and the summaries being discussed by large groups of people leaves a door ajar to rejuvenated commentary and ideologies. This method, for example, is not a practice that was common for the traditional system of education and this demonstrates that the educational disciplines adopted by Gülen are influenced by paradigms in the Qur'an and s*unnah*.

Gülen supports his theory by giving Said Nursi as an example. According to him, Nursi was able to raise a large number of students due to the fact that he summarised the books of the *Risale-i Nur* collection as he taught them. Gülen

[843] *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler -2*. p, 174-179
[844] Ergün Çapan, "Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Bilinmeyen bir Yönü: Ders Ve Tedris Metodu."
[845] Gülen, *Yaşatma İdeali*.p, 93

considers this method to be significantly effective, as the student being able to compose summarised answers to "what have I gathered from this?" after every discussion is of unparalleled benefit.[846] Students schooled by him agree that Gülen has been practicing this method for a long time and that is indeed rewarding.[847]

Since it is impossible to mention all the books summarised[848] by them, it is beneficial to name a few.[849]

Comparing, discussing and commenting

Gülen's students express that the lessons he conducts are constructed upon following different notions from different books, hence illustrating a method of learning aided by comparison. He is able to establish new and original commentaries by analysing the correlation between the knowledge acquired by previous eras and the science accepted today, the science of *hadith* being the leading link of the chain. This also inspires the students to advance in their abilities to criticise and make remarks. In order to avoid discrepancy in the comments made, Gülen ensures that the main resource is read and weighed carefully, whilst its content is evaluated according to the aspects that concern today's age.[850] At this point, it is necessary to indicate that Gülen does not use definite or conclusive statements when deliberating and commenting on *hadith*. Rather, he focuses on possibilities and leaves doors open to further remarks by making statements like "this *hadith* could be evaluated in this way", or "the following meaning could be derived from this *hadith*". In this way, he does not limit the applicability the essence of the *hadith* could have for different eras. An example of

[846] Gülen, *Kırık Testi-1*.
[847] *Regarding Fethullah Gülen's Teaching Methods in Islamic Science*
[848] Ergün Çapan, "Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Bilinmeyen Bir Yönü: Ders Ve Tedris Metodu."
[849] Mustafa Sabri; *Mawqif al-Aql wa al-Ilm wa al-Alam min Rabb al-Alamin wa Rasulihi*, Shurnubi; *Hikam-i Ataiya-Sharhi*, M. Aajjac al-Khatîp; *al-Sunnat Qabla al-Tadwin*, M. Tahir Ibn Ashur; *Maqasıd al-Sharia al--Islâmiyya*, Izz al-Din Abd al-Azîz b. Abd al-Salam; *Qawa'id al-Ahkam fi Masalih al-Anam*.
[850] *Regarding Fethullah Gülen's Teaching Methods in Islamic Science*

this is Prophet Muhammad's *hadith* about a creature that is said to emerge before Doomsday: "*Dabbat al-ard* is going to appear, roam the universe and will be visible from every angle." Whilst some Islamic thinkers claim that this *hadith* foreshadowed AIDS, Gülen points out that it is not plausible to interpret it so and place a definite label on the underlying meaning of the Prophet's words.[851]

Similar to the Qur'an, Gülen highlights that *hadith* also speak to and address different eras. If AIDS was to be labelled as *Dabbat al-ard* and a cure was to be found for it, the Prophet's interpretation would be found unreasonable and the credibility of the s*unnah* would be damaged. Hence, the real *Dabbat al-ard* to emerge before Judgement Day would not be recognised, and the counterpart of the Prophet's words would never be discovered. Consequently, it is not appropriate to make conclusive statements when commenting on *hadith*, and claiming to have discovered the meaning of the Prophet's interpretation. The matter requires being approached with possibilities and left with question marks.[852] Along with this, Gülen renders his comments regarding *Dabbat al- ard* and other portents of the Hour by reflecting upon the tidings given in different *hadith* at different times.[853] For example, many *hadith* indicate that *Dabbat* is an incident that will occur before Judgement Day and that immediately after, there will be no believers left to channel belief onto others. However, there is also a *hadith* that claims that "The message of Prophet Muhammad will be heard of and accepted on every land that witnesses the sunrise and sunset." [854] Considering that this glad tiding has not yet surfaced, accepting that Dabbat *al-ard* is AIDS will impoverish the hopes of believers.[855] Thereby, discrepancy between the

[851] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Questions and Answers About Islam*, trans. Muhammed Çetin (New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2010).p, 103-112
[852] ibid.
[853] ibid.
[854] Muslim, *fitan* 19; Abu Dawud, *fitan* 1; Tirmidhî, *fitan* 14; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad* 4/123, 5/278.
[855] Gülen, *Questions and Answers About Islam*.p,103-112

hadith will be formed, and their applicability to different ages will be questioned. The tidings given in the first *hadith* enlighten humanity about incidents to take place before Judgement Day, however, its scope cannot be confined to one definite meaning. This approach of Gülen could also mean that he opposes any kind of conclusive attitude towards a matter.

In addition to this, Gülen takes care to discuss the content of *hadith* and *sunnah* in conjunction with various branches of science. [856] By doing this, he draws attention to the points of intersection between *hadith* and today's fields of science, enabling himself and others to construct a scientific commentary; in one respect, this produces a notion unique to him. Herein, it is important to express that during extensive discussions of the topics, Gülen does not take the footnotes into consideration with all their details. [857] Hence, on the one hand, he prevents the wasting of time by focusing on the aspects of sections that concern the current age. On the other hand, keeping within the boundaries of respect, Gülen does not abstain from criticising old commentaries. At points where he considers certain commentaries inappropriate, Gülen expresses that in respect of the specific era it was written in, he would have phrased his remarks differently. When evaluating *hadith* in accordance with today's age, Gülen weaves his opinion by frequently stating; "it might be more appropriate if this *hadith* was interpreted in this way for its applicability to our time".[858] Whilst his approach demonstrates that he accepts the *sunnah* as a solution, it also implies that individuals competent in the field of *hadith* science can make certain contributions to commentaries.

[856] *Regarding Fethullah Gülen's Teaching Methods in Islamic Science*
[857] ibid.
[858] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.

The question and answer method

The most effective method that Gülen uses in both his lessons and public sermons is the question and answer method. During the lessons, questions asked by students having difficulty are all answered by Gülen and if need be, questions are also asked by Gülen himself.[859] Whilst applying this method, Gülen does not permit time loss by answering questions that have been answered before, and he bases[860] this on examples of the s*unnah*.[861] Throughout his lifetime, Gülen used this method at mosques, coffee houses and if need be, during sermons. He currently practices it with the students he raises.[862]

Using technology for educational purposes

Gülen consistently pursues every advancement made regarding the *sunnah*, and encourages his students to do the same with any and every kind of technical facility. When Gülen compares today's circumstances with that of the Prophet's companions, he emphasises that with facilities such as computers, the internet and television that allow scientific data to be collected and distributed effortlessly, believers should be able to reach the immaculate level of performance that the companions had demonstrated.[863] With this, Gülen gives his students goals that will constantly renew themselves, and presents humanity with a research method that will involve following up with new developments and commentaries regarding the *sunnah*

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[859] *Regarding Fethullah Gülen's Teaching Methods in Islamic Science*

[860] M.Fethullah Gülen, "Doğru Yer ve Zamanda Doğru Sorular Sorulmalı," (3. Mart. 2006), http://fgulen.com/tr/fethullah-gulenin-kursu-akademi-yazilari/fethullah-gulen-2006-kursuleri/12007-Fethullah-Gulen-Zaman-Dogru-Yer-ve-Zamanda-Dogru-Sorular-Sorulmali?highlight=WyJzb3J1bGFyIl0=.

[861] Angel Gabriel had appeared in human form to the Prophet and his Companions, asking questions to the Prophet about iman, Islam, benevolence and the Hereafter. The Prophet answered them. (Bukharî; Muslim; Abu Dawud; Tirmidhî; Ibn Mâjah)

[862] M.Fethullah Gülen, "Soru-Cevaplar Üzerine ", (20.05.2008), http://fgulen.com/tr/fethullah-gulenin-butun-eserleri/prizma-serisi/fethullah-gulen-zihin-harmani/15518-Fethullah-Gulen-Soru-Cevaplar-Uzerine

[863] M.Fethullah Gülen, *Yaşatma İdeali* (İstanbul: Nil Publications, 2010), p, 201-202

with technical fluency. By the practicing of this method, Gülen aims to establish sound archives of resources, easy access to these and hence utilise time effectively.

The Islamic sources taught by Gülen

It is sufficient to touch upon a few of the fundamental resources in the field of *hadith* without discussing the books followed by Gülen in detail. These resources are highly regarded and followed by Gülen as they shelter the topical aspects of *hadith.*[864] He is consistently in an endeavour to ensure his students are raised as competent individuals in their knowledge of these resources. By following this path, he aims to carry both historical and modern collections to the future, preserving the original whilst relaying modernised commentary to the next generations. The following are some of the books that he reads and encourages his students to read to gain knowledge about the field of *hadith*;

a) *The Sahih Bukhari* collection by Muhammad b. Ismail Bukhari, After the Qur'an, it is regarded as the second most valid book. Gülen ensures Bukhari is read along with the following commentaries:

    a. Qastallânî (923/1517), *Irshad As-Sari fi Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari*.

    b. Badr al-Din al-Ayni (855/1453), *Umdat al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. (20 cilt) It is one of the most important commentaries based on *Bukhari*.

    c. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (852/1448), *Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*.

b) *Sahih Muslim,* which was later, named *al-Musnad al-Sahih* (5 volumes) by Imam Abul- Husain Muslim ibn Hajjaj (261/874).

[864] Ergün Çapan, "Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Bilinmeyen Bir Yönü: Ders Ve Tedris Metodu."

c) *Sunan (4 Volumes)* written by Abu Dawud Al-Sijistani (275/888).

   a. *Badhl al-Majhud fi Hall Sunan Abi Dawud* (10 volumes) written by Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri (1346/1927).

   b. *Al-Manhal al-Adhb al-Mawrud Sharh Sunan Abi Dawud* (10 volumes) is a commentary written by Mahmud Ibn Muhammad Khattab As-Subki (1352/ 1933).

d) *Jami' at-Tirmidhi* by Abu `Isa Muhammad ibn `Isa at-Tirmidhi. (279/892).

e) *Al- Muwatta* (2 volumes) by Malik ibn Anas (179/795).

f) *Sunan* (2 volumes) written by Ahmad ibn Shu`ayb ibn Ali ibn Sinan Abu `Abd ar-Rahman al-Nasa'i (303/915).

g) *Kitab at-Tâj al-Jâmi* (5 volumes) written by M. Ali Nâsif.

h) *'Uqud al-j'awahir al-munifa* (2 volumes) written by al-Murtada al-Husayni al-Zabidi (1205/1790).

i) *Kanz al-Ummal* (16 volumes) by Ali al-Muttaqi (975/1567).

j) *Riyad Al-Salihin Min Kalam Sayyid Al-Mursalin* by Zakariyya an-Nawawi (676/1277).

k) *Ash-shifa bi Ta'rif Huquq al-Mustafa* (2 volumes) by Qadhi Iyadh (544/1149).

l) *Al Lu'lu Wal Marjan* (2 volumes) by Muhammad Fuad Abdul Baqi (1388/1968).

m) *Uqudul Jawahirul Munifa* (2 volumes) by Imam Az-Zabidi. [865]

[865] ibid.

When the total amount of the books that Gülen teaches is considered, it is seen that he is right in his claims of having spent his entire life studying the *sunnah*. If it is recognised that each of these books were read and revised several times, the key to Gülen's insistence on writing about the *Sunnah* in detail throughout his own works would be better understood. When his methods of education are also examined, it is seen that Gülen is strongly affiliated with these traditional resources, and is in an attempt to generate their essence to the future also. With this stance, he aims to preserve the values of s*unnah* and take lessons from them that concern today's age whilst staying in search of new methods to develop his notion. In a way, this also aids in preventing the gradual apathy too much familiarity with a specific method may bring about, and preserves the vividness of the *sunnah*.

How do Gülen's opinions reflect on academia

How does the education system and ideology followed by Gülen contribute to the novelty of academia? This question is one of the topics that are most anticipated. The painting portrays a Gülen who started his journey as an imam at a mosque, who influenced nations with his education principles and about whom seminars, conferences, symposiums and academic research were held. Although he does not hold a diploma from an official school, Gülen has attracted the attention of many who specialise in medicine by being a steadfast autodidact in fields of science including biology and astronomy. The fruits of this accumulation of knowledge can be observed in the books and articles authored by him.[866] Gülen is known to be a thinker who has close to 70 books, and a vast range of audio and video recordings.

Some perspectives on Gülen's educational practices

Researchers of different universities have made Gülen's contributions to education their field of research. John L. Esposito indicates that it would be more

[866] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* p, 17.

plausible to recognise the success of the schools, universities and organisations established under Gülen's influence rather than scrutinise controversies regarding his ideas. According to him, Gülen has proved that Islam can coexist with modernity and science and aid a change for the better, and has already showed countries such as America the effect of this with his schools.[867] Gülen supports his ideas about education and makes them tangible with the action he takes to achieve them. He is also in an effort to substantiate that *sunnah*-oriented practice is able to walk the same as lane as modern educational theories. Almazbek Beishenaliev offers a different perspective, and claims that by presenting science with values such as the heart, soul, and manners, Gülen evaluates a person as a whole and hence aims for a communal build founded upon humanistic values. According to Beishanaliev, teachers who are raised by Gülen's views abide by universal notions such as love, friendship, affection and tolerance as criteria for teaching science.[868] Similarly, Loye Ashton argues that love plays the largest role in Gülen's reasoning of education.[869] With such values being adopted, the relationship between teachers and students develop and the school becomes a family environment. Loye agrees that according to Gülen, ambitious teachers are ones who pay heed to human beings regardless of the physical and monetary difficulties they experience, and are able to bring together students of different cultures, religions and races to form an atmosphere of peace. Whilst doing

[867] John L. Esposito, "The Gülen Movement: Paradigms, Projects, and Aspirations" (paper presented at the Gulen Movement conference, International House at University of Chicago, 11-13. November. 2010).

[868] Almazbek Beishenaliev, *Pedagogical Ideas of F. Gulen and Hizmet Movement on Education*, (Johns Hopkins University, 4. December. 2013).

[869] Loye Ashton, "Defending Religious Diversity and Tolerance in America Today: Lessons from Fethullah Gülen," (12 November 2005), http://fgulen.com/en/gulen-movement/conference-papers/1338-the-fethullah-gulen-movement-i/25503-defending-religious-diversity-and-tolerance-in-america-today-lessons-from-fethullah-gulen?hitcount=0.

so, these teachers are also able to respect the governmental structure, culture and religion of the country they reside in.[870]

Another researcher, Eileen Eppig points to the discovery that there is a strong relationship between Gülen's portrayal of astronomy and the Qur'an. According to her, Gülen accepts the Qur'an as the main source in deciphering the universe and provides tangible evidence to prove that these two fields of science are indeed complementary.[871] From Eppig's approach, it is understood that Gülen studies science such as physics laws in conjunction with the Qur'an and *sunnah*, and that knowledge from previous eras can be carried on to the present day. For Gülen believes that the *sunnah* plays the role of a guard in protecting philosophical, medical, scientific and mental knowledge. With this insight, Gülen presents a unique approach to the connections between God, human beings and the universe.[872]

The logic of reasoning and researching in theology

Gülen strives to establish a new format of thinking and calls for academicians in the field of theology to focus on branches of science. To him, besides being well versed in the Qur'an and *sunnah*, a theologian should also become familiar with physics, chemistry, mathematics, anthropology and astronomy.[873] Hence, specialists of theology would be equipped to answer questions posed by people of different sects of society and possess strong theories. Herein, Gülen criticises the schools of theology in Turkey that have their doors tightly closed on the acquiring of scientific knowledge

[870] Beishenaliev, *Pedagogical Ideas of F. Gulen and Hizmet Movement on Education*.
[871] Eileen Eppig, *Fethullah Gulen's Care for All Creation as a Means to Nonviolence*, (University of Maryland, 29. Oct. 2009).
[872] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kendi Dünyamıza Doğru* (Istanbul: Nil Publishing, 2011).p, 66-67.
[873] Gülen, *Yaşatma İdeali*.(*The Ideal Of sustentation*). p,116

in conjunction with religious values.[874] He believes that this situation is contradictory to both the spiritual and conceptual system of Islam.

It could be said that Said Nursi has had great influence on Gülen's way of thought. Scientific explanations can be found woven along religious narratives throughout Nursi's works. According to Gülen, studying the compatibility Qur'anic verses and the *sunnah* have with scientific data poses injustice towards those values,[875] for the Qur'an and *sunnah* are regarded as guides and testimonials by researchers. Gülen believes that Prophets did not attain scientific results by neither research nor experimental methods, but were granted wisdom and knowledge by Allah through divine revelations. Modern science has only recently begun to discover the mankind-universe-God truth that prophets had advised thousands of years ago. Due to the ambiguous nature of experiments, science is a body that continuously questions itself and searches for innovation. It is constantly in an attempt to safeguard its discoveries with the hypotheses developed and is usually not able to step out of the circle that contains the already proven. However, besides this are the modern laboratories that study scientific data with advanced technology under the light of Prophetic messages.[876] At this point, Gülen rightfully despises the neglecting of religious resources and encourages them to be regarded as of higher importance. With his mindset, he does not aim to undervalue science, but rather to highlight the synergy between them.

The following conclusion could also be made after considering Gülen's approaches; with his proposal to Turkey's faculties of theology, Gülen is also calling for academicians of the science field to tend to his ideas. He is inviting them to

[874] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* p, 109.
[875] Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde -2 (Essentials of the Islamic Faith)*.p,159-160.
[876] *Kendi Dünyamıza Doğru*.(*Towards Our Own World)*p, 141-143

question theories based on an axis of Qur'an and *sunnah*, hoping to reconstruct the severed bond between religion and science.[877] Gülen hence advises the educational foundations he recommends Turkey to establish to teach science in conjunction with Islamic studies, and strives to create grounds on which this could be achieved.[878]

It could be drawn from Gülen's ideas that the faculties of theology in Turkey are in need of a reconstructed curriculum. This method will allow the faculty of theology with a curriculum devoid of science to gain depth, create a harmonious bridge between scientific and Islamic studies and establish a wide ranging association between the two branches.

Gülen's proposal to study theology with science holds the power to unify these two different worlds of wisdom and build ground on which research can reach its summit. This situation will revive the belief that the Qur'an and *sunnah* are indeed the main resources of science, and people will thus be on quests to rediscover the vast number of libraries or archives both in Turkey and around the world. Hence, scientific discoveries of previous eras are going to be recognised once more and these historical masterpieces are going to be of great acquisition to the country's cultural values. Besides this, the repeating of mistakes made in the past is also going to be easier to avoid.

Along with his discussed approach, Gülen also takes care to point out to some of the differences between Islamic and prevalent philosophy, and compares the resources of both. According to him, non- Islamic philosophy does not take divinity into account and attributes its theories to human beings, objects and events. It narrows the path of knowledge by giving intelligence priority over belief and accepting observations and discoveries as the fruits of scientific data. As opposed to this,

[877] ibid.86.
[878] Discussion with Fethullah Gülen's student Ibrahim Kocabıyık, *Islam and Science*, 11.July.2014.

Islamic culture leaves doors open to new commentaries by studying matters under the light of the Quran and s*unnah*, using their own intelligence along with scientific perspectives.[879] By touching upon the difference between these two, Gülen presents the Quran and s*unnah* as the source of scientific thinking and thus introduces his proposal, preparing ground for the harmony between philosophy, science and religion.

Gülen's discussed proposals could be said to have been influenced by the madrasah system of education. According to him, madrasahs –which literally mean "spaces where lessons are given"- are not places at which one only acquires religious knowledge, but discusses different fields of science along with it.[880] Gülen sees the neglecting of science by the madrasahs of more recent centuries as a detrimental mistake.[881] Islam's understanding and appreciation of science had been proven and a golden age had been lived with these institutions supporting the unity of sciences. However, the neglecting of this system with the centuries that followed caused bigotry and controversy, and mysticism paralysed any developments that arose.[882]

Gülen believes madrasahs should emerge in the world of academia once more and contribute to education as a system of its own. Along with this, he does not oversee the need for a wider range of Islamic resources to be taught at these institutions, and adds new commentaries and books written about *hadith* and tafsir in the recent years to his list. During discussions held about tafsir, Gülen claims it a must for at least 20 tafsir resources to be found and discussed for each Qur'anic verse.[883] Gülen presents his own thoughts after sieving them through discussions on and

[879] *Kendi Dünyamıza Doğru*.p, 86
[880] *Fasıldan Fasıla 3*.p, 116
[881] Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* p, 109.
[882] ibid.109.110.
[883] Every student attending the lessons would follow at least one or two books about tafsir and present the contents' summary to Gulen and his peers during the lessons. As a result, he would contribute to the formation of new and fresh perspectives.

analyses of 20 different books.[884] Hence, this method offers a promising and effective innovation for aspiring theologians. Gülen also recommends the field of tafsir to adopt the "science committee" he had proposed for the area of fiqh (Islamic law), which comprises of individuals with different fields of expertise that are able to verify Qur'anic verses with current scientific discoveries. He believes that through this, a credible commentary addressing today's matters can be established.[885]

In addition to this, Gülen strongly urges[886] his students to become fluent in 3-4 languages.[887] This demonstrates that he is in an attempt to help theologians studying religion gain different perspectives, for it is important for every masterpiece to be read and studied in its original language. Through this, academicians are better able to integrate with a range of civilisations and cultures. This approach of Gülen shows similarity to the Prophet's advice to his Companions about learning foreign languages. Besides this, Gülen also encourages his students to utilise their time in America by continuing their university education with Masters or PhD degrees in various fields.[888] Such an approach evokes an understanding influenced by Mawlana Rumī, as his wisdom, spirituality and love oriented thinking can be seen to have reflected on today's affairs by Gülen. It could be claimed that these methods carried out by Gülen will continuously refresh the goals and aspirations of the world of academia, helping it maintain its contemporary nature.

Gülen enheartening his students well versed in theology to study their PhD in different fields also contributes to a vivid sphere of education. A physics graduate studying his PhD in theology and a graduate of theology doing a PhD on physics may

[884] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.
[885] M.Fethullah Gülen, *Journey to Noble Ideals* (Clifton, USA: Tughra Publishing, 2014).p, 94-95
[886] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.
[887] It is known that Gulen is well acquainted with Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian.
[888] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.

help in constructing a promising bridge between branches of science.[889] This could be understood by comparing the situation to the necessity of performing an angio on a patient with blood clots in his vascular veins so as to prevent further damage.

In order to train them efficiently, Gülen assigns tasks of research about specific topics to his students, and discusses the results with them. For example, topics such as music in Islam, insurance systems, economy, banking and international law are analysed with consideration of varying perspectives, and a vast range of resources are read to attain the best results.[890] An applied example of the previously discussed academic committee[891] recommended by Gülen can be observed in this method.

Another one of Gülen's significant contributions to theology is having brought back the science of '*rijal*' to the curriculum of *hadith* science today. Cuma Ördü, a pupil of Gülen, emphasises that this field had been neglected and forgotten about for several years, and that Gülen has made a great calling of reviving its significance. Ördü claims that whilst Talat Koçyiğit- an intellectual renowned in *hadith* science- points to the difficulty of becoming learned about a *hadith* collection named "*Kutub Al Sittah*", he highlights that Gülen has memorised the collection along with its '*rijal*'.[892] In addition to this, Canan has further accentuated the importance of the issue by stating: "Unfortunately, the science of *rijal* is a matter that is overlooked in Turkey. I wonder if any corner of the Islamic world has been able to recognise it as

[889] During a conference at the USA, we had witnessed an academician/researcher in the field of physics who had completed his PhD in theology by evaluating information/data he had come across in the Quran and *sunnah*.(Mart, 2013)
[890] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.
[891] This suggestion of Gulen has been put into practice on a small scale in Istanbul; for now, academicians with expertise in theology are doing the research. However, as conditions allow it, academicians of different fields will be invited to contribute in the future.
[892] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.

something important and apply it as well as Gülen has. I personally do not know, but believe in the necessity of doing so.[893]

The sensitivity in making provision of Islamic science

Gülen draws attention to the problems in different fields that are issues of expertise in finding a solution to new interpretation and jurisprudence. And he gives meticulous attention to the falsification of religious values and the denial of misjudgement. This is because an error in the centre will give rise to considerable misunderstanding and interpretation in society. If jurisprudence and expertise criteria are not taken as the base, the provisions of religions may come out by authorities and individuals. Furthermore, the Prophet, will be spoken by personal thoughts and judgments and the most important values could be made open to unqualified comments.[894]

Due to his calculated hesitations in changing conditions on matters of jurisprudence to be solved in the century, Gülen draws attention to the formation of a committee and assembly.[895] With this, the intention is for the Islamic world to meet in the commonalities and ijtihad of fiqh issues. Thereby, he prefers to open a new door to unity and togetherness in the Islamic world. According to Gülen, the committee should be formed with the participation of experts and academics in social science, religion and science from every corner of the Islamic geography. In these considerations he encourages symposiums and conferences to be organised. He sends attestation messages to such programs that he will not be able to attend.[896] For instance, he attended with a message to the "Conferencing and Collective Consciousness" symposium in which Muhammed Yusuf Niyazi (Afghanistan),

[893] Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı*.p, 79
[894] Gülen, *Mefkure Yolculuğu (A Journey into the Ideals)*. p,156.
[895] Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken 1(The Statue of Our Souls)*.p,58-63
[896] Gulen, "Fethullah Gülen's message to the International symposium "Ijtihad and Qiyas: The richness of Islam" (2014), http://fgulen.com/en/press/messages/44412-fethullah-gulens-message-to-the-international-symposium-ijtihad-and-qiyas-the-richness-of-islam?hitcount=0

Muhammad Imarah (Egypt), Rashid al-Ghannushi (Tunisia), Isam al-Bashir (Sudan), Muhammadu Sa'ad Ababakar (Nigeria), Muhammad Mukhtar ash-Shinqitee (Qatar), Ahmad Abbadi (Morocco), Muhammad Babaammi (Algeria) and other Islamic scholars from many different countries participated.[897] At the same time, Gülen draws attention to an important point in the functioning of the committee. Shura (assembly) is a natural right for the administrators and participants of the committee. In the exercise of this right, there is no supremacy of one side against the other as God highlights equality with the following verse[898]: "...and whose affairs are by consultation among themselves"[899] In this case everyone will have equal terms whilst resolving the problems of Muslims. Therefore, conflicts such as leadership will not be given the opportunity to arise.

As previously expressed, this committee must be constructed with the coexistence of social science, religion and science experts[900] as their knowledge will be needed for the provision of religious diagnosis and identification. For example, yeast that is derived from a portion of a pig is considered forbidden in Islam. However, the use of this chemically processed section is interpreted differently by Islamic scholars. According to Ibn Hazm, Ibn Taymiyye and currently Hayrettin Karaman, substances which compromise their physical properties after passing through chemical processing is considered admissible.[901] On the contrary, other scholars have held and hold the view that the pig itself is forbidden, whether or not the substance has been modified through the chemical process.[902] Here, Gülen points out that there should be biology and chemistry experts alongside theologians in the

[897] http://ortakyolicma.org/sempozyum/ingilizcecontent
[898] Qur'an, 42:38
[899] Qur'an, 42:38
[900] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.
[901] Hayrettin Karaman, "İslâm Hukukunda Zarûret Hali," http://www.hayrettinkaraman.net/kitap/meseleler/0177.htm
[902] *Ahmet Kurucan, Fıkıh Dünyamız* (*Our Jurisprudence world)* (İstanbul: Işık Publishing, 2011).p,405-407.

committee for an exchange of views. The percentage of material that is subject to change through the chemical process, for example, needs to be determined. In such situations where extensive expertise is required, religious proficiency will not be sufficient as one cannot find a solid answer through an analysis of vastly differing opinions. Similarly, the opinions of economic experts will be needed on matters of public concern such as Islamic banking, insurance and credit use.[903] Since there are no committee-driven verdicts on these issues, incorrect or false views are bound to arise, and provisions will be disregarded leading to Muslims individually striving to found their own judgements from their interpretations of the *sunnah*. At the same time, consistent and accurate solutions to social issues will not be present to tend to the needs of the community.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

This study has focused on the significance and position of *sunnah* in Islam. The thesis consists of primary sources of *hadith*, reliability and the evidence preserved since the Prophet's era. However, Gülen's understanding of *sunnah*, his methods and considerations in defence of *sunnah*, his new reviews on *sunnah*, his knowledge towards *sunnah* and teaching methods and his *sunnah* axis solutions to today's problems has been the main focus of the thesis. Gülen's understanding of *sunnah* has been scrutinized in light of current contemporary issues. Furthermore, Muslim scholars and intellectuals' position and approach and to *sunnah* have been discussed and juxtaposed in the literature review and Chapter One.

This chapter elaborates on the general conclusion as well as the contributions of the thesis in this field. Also, it investigated on the researched topic along with the

[903] *Reflection of Gülen's Thoughts on Academia*.

difficulties and limitations encountered during the research process. Furthermore, the thesis also focuses on the recommendations on the potential and scope of research to be accomplished in the future.

Significance of the results and general conclusion

The *sunnah*, as it had become known, is a compilation of the speech and acts of the Prophet. Jurisprudence, theology, exegesis and Islamic disciplines such as *sirah* are developed under the light of *sunnah*. Furthermore, *sunnah* has been exposed to criticism and has been questioned about its authenticity by the critics. Therefore, critics did not consider *hadith* as a source of Islamic law. As mentioned in the literature review and Chapter Two, the *sunnah* was not accepted as a source in Islam by some Muslim intellectuals both in the past and current post-modern times.

Furthermore, relevant chapters of this thesis in defence of the authenticity of *sunnah* has been elucidated and detailed. Meanwhile Gülen's interpretations are included in this area of discussion.

One of the points discussed in the thesis, *sunnah*, being recorded by the companions along with the Qur'an from the period of the Prophet. However, some critics use the prohibition of written records as a source in their thesis to demonstrate uncertainty as to whether *sunnah* has not been conserved since the period of the Prophet. The point to take attention here is to create an opposing thesis for the prohibition of *sunnah* recording which is presented as a source of *sunnah*.

In addition, as indicated in the study, the Qur'an clearly demonstrates evidence that the Sunnah were transmitted. In this regard, there is no doubt in the delivery of the preserved written/verbal *sunnah* in the next eras or decades following the demise of the Holy Prophet in the time of his companions. Otherwise, the authenticity of the Quran will become questionable.

Even though there had been temporary restrictions while recording the *sunnah* (in the virtue of the risk of interference with the Qur'an verses), the Prophet had encouraged and allowed them to continue memorizing and internalizing for the benefit of future generations. If this restriction is to be briefly analyzed, it can be said that it encompasses the era were the literacy rate was low in Mecca where Islam was practiced mostly underground and with much constraints.

From another perspective, it can be considered that the ban is imposed as an alert for the companions with inadequate equipment of the Prophet's *hadith* disciplines. This situation should not be considered as a constraint on the basis of the recording of *sunnah*, contrary to protecting the religious sources, to distinguish from each other. In this way the Prophet has once more emphasized on the importance of *sunnah* and created a base for the recordings. So in the record of a religious source there should be maximum attention has been taken down as a notice.

Sunnah's provision and accuracy in Islamic law, its propriety with the Quran as a matter of fact marks its authenticity as significant evidence. At the same time it is a significant factor that *sunnah* does not contradict with modern scientific data. However, it interprets the Qur'an's equivocal verses and subjects that need further explanatory detail. Thus, the Qur'an, via *sunnah* was able to shed full light on numerous issues and for the broader community as a means of guidance and a tool of practice.

Sunnah possesses characteristics due to where it was formed along with the lifestyle of the individuals and society in the previous periods, eras and decades. For this reason, individuals and societies (from the youngest individual, from philosopher to scholar) have been kept alive and disciplined. It has maintained its vitality and offers reasonable prescriptions to the problems and needs in every era. So *sunnah* stands out with its attributes which like the Qur'an remains relevant to the past and

future . According to Islamic scholars, the *sunnah* will always empower and equip individuals in the future with distinctive qualities, which can answer to challenges in the scientific, social society and cultural fields.

As Gülen bases on the practical aspects of *sunnah* in the AH 1.2 and Prophet's era, he advocates *sunnah*'s compatibility with today's practice and presents answers. As the present day and scientific research does not fall into contradiction, the *sunnah* rather gives support and proves its authenticity and reliability. Gülen's method in defence of the *sunnah* is said to successful in theory and practice. Yet practice and experimenting are a significant factor in the solution of scientific research and social events. At this stage of testing the *sunnah*, his method of approach has demonstrated its safety and authenticity.

According to Gülen, the validity and status of *sunnah* has been achieved by passing through an extensive assessment. However, Gülen closely follows the work of defending *sunnah*, and recommends others to follow up with clarification and elucidation whenever needed.

In the practice of *sunnah*, Gülen has adopted Said Nursi`s methods. Nursi is against thoughts which are aimed at targeting faith; he is recognized for his intellectual-scientific defence of the Qur'an. Gülen draws attention to the reality of the Qur'an as well as the practicing of the *sunnah*, convey an appropriate interpretation to the *sunnah* and in this way it will fill the faith gap in the lives of Muslims. Therefore, Gülen focuses on *sunnah* devoted to faith and practice on his *hadith* selection rather than *hadith*s predominantly consisting of provision of rewards and endowments. In this manner, he tries to prove that *sunnah* can be habitable and practical in the contemporary age. In Brief, Gülen approach to *sunnah* can be summarized a kalamisation of the *hadith.*

Gülen's knowledge and perspective of Quran has enhanced his approach towards the *sunnah*. Otherwise, the *sunnah* being a practical thesis will not be persuasive. In this way, Gülen brings the *sunnah* alive by combining it with Nursi's Qur'an interpretation. Therefore, he reveals the Qur'an and *sunnah* as a unity as well as a way of life complimentary to one another. The objective of Gülen from this point is to have an effort to prove that the early stage of Islam can be lived out again and again into the future. In other words, Gülen is very insistent on socializing the *sunnah.*

It is clearly shown that Gülen rather focuses on the aspects of it related to deeds and actions instead of just summarizing *hadith* discipline and its major terms. Information rather than action excites Gülen more. Given this method and approach, it can be seen that Gülen readily offers solutions to the problems for the individuals, family, society and different cultures. In contrast to many other scholars, Gülen re-activates the *sunnah* in contemporary time. Thus, *sunnah* is an active source for Gülen. At the same time it has been emphasized on Gülen's knowledge of 'rijal' science and has strengthened Gülen's place for his *hadith* defence.

The contributions of the thesis

This research has focused on some scattered *sunnah* interpretations in Gülen's work which were analyzed. In this regard, Gülen's interpretations have been encountered in Canan's work as an example. However, this study has focused on sample comments that will guide future researchers. For example, themes that have been misjudged in the current era like women in Islam, terror, suicide bomber, jihad, tolerance and dialogue have brought new *sunnah*-sourced interpretations. In the literature review Gülen bears the original structure of the *sunnah* from the early stage of Islam to the current era. At the same time, he creates a base for a clear understanding of Islam for the non-Muslims and contributes to world peace. This is a depiction of Gülen through his works , rather than a classical Islamic scholar portrait;

equipped with positive science, he is revealed as a scholar that can read and interpret the contemporary era.

My study has analyzed Gülen's approach in defence of the *sunnah*. Today's scientificity of *sunnah* is as important as the historical records and evidence in the defence of *sunnah*. In this thesis, attention is drawn to how *sunnah* coincides with scientific data and how it is a divine source. The meeting and solidarity of religious and scientific sources gain clarity in Gülen's interpretations. Gülen makes it clear that, *sunnah* is to be protected and conducted like the way Qur'an has been. This is very important aspect of his re-reading of *sunnah* in modern period. It is safe to assume that Gülen's approach to *sunnah* is more theology-oriented than history. *Sunnah* is under the protection of God like the Qur'an, but the responsibility is given to the believers to sustain and maintain this onerous honorific task. Nevertheless, he never disregards Qur'an's priority over *sunnah.*

Some readings of Gülen's works and teaching methods can be an example in the academia. Analysis and comparisons were made on this subject, which refers to his educating criteria (mutual negotiation, book summarizing, etc.). In this way, important works and methods have been pointed out with their outline under the faculty of theology and Islamic disciplines.

Limitation of the Study

An important factor of constraint is that Gülen's presence in America and unavailability of his health status prevented the planned interview. In 2013, due to his interview being cancelled because of health issues, the requested information could not be reached. Gülen could have been asked in the interview about the reason for writing down a detailed research about the *sunnah* and a distinctive work. Information about the details of an independent study on this subject could also have been recorded. As stated in the contributions of the thesis, *hadith* and *sunnah*

interpretations in Gülen's works, are not presented in a particular work but spread over to all his works. Researching interpretations in close to 70 of his works and following up from oral-visual sources is difficult and requires responsibility. This attribute offers challenges to his works being an academic resource or means of literary reference. Also, his works being usually changed from a speech format to a transcript relatively drifts it away from academic style. But the simple explanation is that a base is prepared to facilitate its understanding by all and taking the mission into practice. It can be said that Gülen prefers this method of teaching. Yet, *sunnah*'s fundamental quality is speaking at the understandable level for all people. Besides that, the seminars, conferences etc. he presents in regard of the theory of evolution with his scientific criteria can't be ignored. When necessary, he stands out with his emphasis on science while teaching his pupils. For example, his "The heart of the Emerald Dunes" four-volume work is in form of cornerstones in regard of Sufism along with significant sources.

Gülen's works being Turkish, a limited number of works have been translated into different languages. For this reason his works have mainly been addressed by researchers in Turkey and by fluent Turkish speakers. In this case, Gülen becomes more difficult to understand and be investigated by different cultures struggling with translations where much of the gist of the originality is lost

However it is possible to gain maximum benefit from Gülen's work via translating it into different languages for the true admirer and lover of Gülen's philosophy and style of writing. Academics from different cultures today recognize Gülen from his translated works and his worldwide mission.

Recommendations for future research

a) The conservation of primary sources is essential to every religion. The Qur'an's, "Your religion is to you, my religion is to me", understanding should

be taken as a basis. For this reason, the basis should be the analysis of religious sources, mutual cooperation and exchange of information. By this method, stronger and faster steps can be taken for dialogue works between religions. This will and can definitely provide significant contributions to world peace.

b) As a researcher, it is difficult to claim that this work does justice to all of the details. A more detailed research can be done in the rapidly advancing global world in the future building on what has been presented as a stepping stone or spring board.

c) The original collection of *sunnah* is maintained in the different nations' libraries. Deterioration is subject due to the physical conditions of the originals of some of the works. The committee Gülen has offered for the *fiqh* disciplines can be taken as an example. With the help of researchers and academics from Muslim countries, the originals of these works can be collected in a library. Thereby, improving the physical conditions will take the works under protection. Subsequently, via the digital data system over the Internet, it can present every user an opportunity to access it easily. In addition, these works being translated into the most common languages (English, Spanish, and Arabic etc.) can create a base for scientific evolution. These studies may lead to a serious acceleration of ideological research and inquiry.

d) In this thesis, some of Gülen's interpretations can be taken as an example to put forward his *sunnah* understanding in a narrow framework. Gülen's *sunnah* sourced interpretations on sciences like medicine, physics, astronomy and economics can be considered as an academic multi-disciplined work.

e) His interpretations in various topics can be collected as an independent study to create a substantial corpus. His thoughts on *sunnah* can be collected in a

treatise under the titles of "*hadith* interpretations" and "*sunnah* defence". Importantly, Gülen's thoughts can be presented as a regular work in this field. Besides that, Gülen's foundation as "*rijal* disciplines" can be taken as a doctorate study itself. Yet, Gülen's criteria and use of *hadith* classified and known as "weak *hadith*" may be another area of research and further investigation and inquiry

f) Gülen's worldwide educational mission can be analyzed under the light of his *sunnah* axis interpretations.

g) Gülen's *sunnah* axis solutions to interfaith dialogue and social problems can be also be analyzed by theorists and researchers from every culture. The obtained results can be presented to the civil society organizations for them to benefit. This occasion will provide significant contributions to world peace. In this context, I believe that it is necessary to conduct a study on a more comprehensive dialogue.

h) Academic studies about Gülen's ideas are still at the initial stage. Conferences and seminars organized on his thoughts and mission articulates the lack in this field. Although there is a widely perceived image of Gülen, it appears to be an incomprehensible Gülen portrait. For this reason, for this portrait to be understood clearly, there should be a more detailed analysis of Gülen's profile.

Conclusion

As a result, Gülen is an Islamic scholar who can read today's world and its problems under the light of the *sunnah*, and producing solutions from this source. He is one of the few academics and thinkers that can combine knowledge, faith and action in the Islamic world. His ideal is to revive the *sunnah* and make it a principle of our lives. Significantly amongst scholars of past centuries, he stands out by how he socializes the *sunnah*. He is recognized as an academic that accepts the dialogue

works in which he has been a leader. Gülen is an Islamic scholar that re-evaluates the Islamic terms like *udhiyya* (sacrifice), *zakat* (charity) to practice in a sense of helping out each other and that forms a base for the fusion of Muslim-non-Muslim worldwide. In this way, Gülen creates a social atmosphere open to everyone, everywhere, anytime.

With the condition of remaining loyal to the original sources in Islam, Gülen is all for innovation and is open towards new interpretations and commentaries. Along with this, Gülen is respectful towards all ideas, and despite differences, does not close all doors on other ideas. He prefers to stay in dialogue and maintain diplomatic relationships with all. He is a representation of peace, love, and tolerance. He insists on the idea that all problems can be solved through maintaining tolerance, dialogue and diplomacy. The inspiration and driving force behind this idea of Gülen is indeed the *sunnah*.

Gülen views illiteracy as a primary problem and views education as the main solution for the problems. For this reason, in his opinion individual and society education, freedom of thought and values such as human rights are a significant priority. This value correlates closely with the rule of law and democratic ideas. For this reason, educational institutions, dialogue centers, cultural centers, "*Kimse Yokmu*" institutions are the result of a democratic and law-based system. Gülen with these expansions is able to show the modern institutionalization appropriate to the century as an example. In these expansions, he follows up *sunnah* step by step.

When Gülen is viewed from this angle he is attuned to the world's agenda with his distanced position from political propaganda and his vision of a non-expecting Islam. As we try addressing Gülen on the way in which he assesses the *sunnah*, he is actually also a scientific asset and a scholar to be understood. He is basically

preoccupied with training heart-totality and human-generation via *sunnah* axis. He significantly approaches universal peace with his global love-respect mission.

However, Gülen is making an insistent effort to prove a thesis, namely that unlawful acts such as suicide bombing, and Islamic terrorism cannot bind with the original structure of Islam. With this reason, he focuses more on the value of *sunnah*. Besides this, he is in an effort to reveal Islam's approach to the phenomenon of the abuse of women. Saying that Gülen is hundred percent successful in solving incidents like terrorism etc. while attempting to demonstrate the originality of Islam, may not fall in accordance with reality. As Turkey and the world's educational works are based on a secular system, he does not have the need to put forward a study representing a *sunnah* source. As an act of respect to religious beliefs, individuals in education and different cultures, he distances himself from religious suggestions. In education, he aims to educate individuals and societies with the universal values. At the same time, it is a basis to train people who can think freely, research, question and which respects other religions and cultures. As education is a process that takes years, it is not possible to expect that it will be completed in a short period of time. So looking from this point of view, Gülen's *sunnah* axis solutions may take time to be understood. Gülen in his education mission embraces how the Qur'an has been revealed over 23 years as a model for long term planning.

Gülen shows care for formal education along with social education and focuses on individuals developing in the fields of business, economics, media and health under the light of *sunnah*. Therefore, he exerts himself in training exemplary people in this sector, where the trained human prototypes in this field support education activities and a strong combination is established. In Gülen's movement, terrorism, internal fights and using drugs are covered by educational activities and ongoing discussions. The terror incidents and drugs in the Southeast of Turkey have

been significantly reduced with the increase of education trainings and drug treatment, counselling and consultation in this area. Society has formed a serious basis for peace. Therefore, in a short period of time, the number of entrants to the university from the region has reached a considerable success and number. Likewise, unlimited examples can be given on how terrorism in other parts of the world and societal fights has been minimized with the educational trainings used in that area. As to be seen, Gülen references the example of Medina in the areas he goes to with the education activities he implements. The first act of the Prophet after his emigration from Mecca to Medina was to constitute social fraternity and establishing a peace environment from different groups of religions.

A major deficiency in the Gülen movement can be seen as the insufficient number of trained theologian researchers. When looking at Turkey in general and the world's reality, it is understood that *hizmet (service)* should take much more significant steps in this field. Extensive work is needed to train theologians that equip what Gülen has offered.

Wherever a majority of theologians present information and theory on the *sunnah* but are oblivious of it into action and practice in our contemporary time, it is a sad state of affairs. Looking at Gülen from this point of view, he possesses a special attribute that he is able to represent the faith-knowledge-action in Islamic world. As Gülen stands out with this attribute, he also emulates the *rijal* disciplines in Islamic world. He personifies this reality and presenting companions as role models for example, and additionally to today's time and era. This approach forms the basis of Gülen's example of the early period of Islam and his aim to revive that generation. It can therefore be said that Gülen sees *sunnah* as a philosophy of life and therefore concentrates his works on it. As to be understood, Gülen has oriented social peace and solidarity with his *sunnah* axis movement. This occasion is an important contribution

to world peace. With the inspiration of *sunnah*, Gülen has kept millions of people who believe in this movement alive and eager for peace and education. Gülen serves in all levels of society yet insists on staying away from political field and stands back from training people in this field. Gülen, in the name of protecting the purity of the movement may be presenting considerations in his mind.

With this, he has become a champion for Islam's holistic original structure which, as he proves is not only a legacy to the Muslim world but also to the world at large. It is safe to assume that Gülen carries out his major revival and renewal project (*tajdid* and *islah*) via *hadith* which is re-orbitted towards the direction of theology.

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